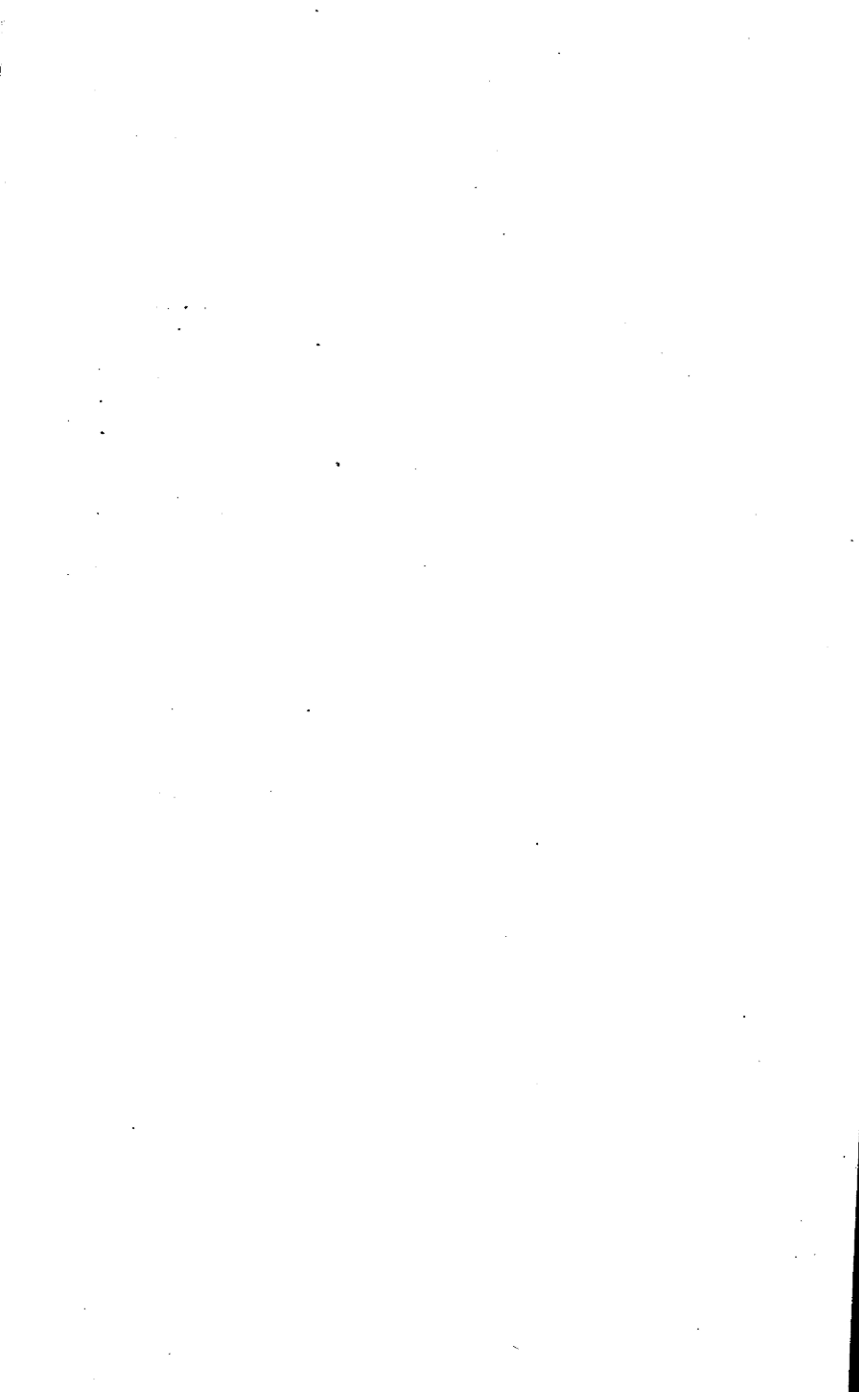


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## **JESUS AND THE MORALISTS**



# JESUS AND THE MORALISTS

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE  
CHRISTIAN ETHIC

By

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*J.W.P.*

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
MY METHODIST GREATGRANDPARENTS  
REV. JOSEPH MANNERS  
AND HIS WIFE ABIGAIL WALES





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## PREFACE

It is now more than forty-five years since a distinguished predecessor in the Fernley Lectureship, the Rev. W. T. Davison, M.A., D.D., made a valuable contribution to the study of Christian Ethics by his book entitled *The Christian Conscience*. To that book many generations of students owe a lasting debt. It is the aim of the present lecture, not of course to retrace the ground so adequately covered by that earlier work, which dealt more especially with the way by which the Christian attains and perfects his *knowledge* of good and evil, but rather to compare the Christian ideal of conduct with the standards adopted by philosophers.

By the term 'moralists' in the title of this lecture is meant, for the most part, those who have *theorized* on the subject of conduct. No reference is therefore made to prophets or seers, whose approach to the subject has been mainly intuitive in character and practical in purpose. Moreover, of the theorists in morals only representative types have been chosen. It will, I hope, not be expected that within the compass of a lecture the selection, even of these, should be exhaustive.

Naturally, in a comparative study like the present, the treatment of the subject is throughout largely critical. Here and there the impression may be given of inadequate sympathy with the views criticized. It is, of course, difficult to escape bias. However, I can only hope that I have avoided any unfair or inaccurate representation of the various schools of ethical thought. On the other hand, my exposition of the Christian ethic does not claim to be complete; it is more or less a sketch or outline made for the specific purpose of comparison with the theories which follow.

Some readers may desire a fuller exposition of the moral theories passed in review. But as these can be studied in full elsewhere, it did not seem necessary in the present lecture to go beyond a statement of their salient features.

It would, of course, be impossible to acknowledge my indebtedness to all who, in the course of the years, have, by their spoken or written word, helped me in my study of this subject. I should like, however, to mention that at the outset my colleague and former Principal, the Rev. J. T. Brewis, B.A., B.D., encouraged me to undertake this Lectureship. The Rev. Prof. C. H. Dodd, D.D., very kindly read through most of Chapter I, and gave me, on many points, the benefit of his expert knowledge. Two of my colleagues at Hartley Victoria College, Mr. Atkinson Lee, M.A., and the Rev. G. G. Hornby, M.A., B.D., generously read through the whole, the former contributing many pertinent philosophical criticisms, and the latter removing faults of style and other blemishes. To Mr. Hornby I am also indebted for the correction of the proofs. I have also had the good fortune to receive help from Prof. T. E. Jessop, M.A., B.Litt., Professor of Philosophy in Hull University College. He read the lecture in typescript, and assisted me greatly by his rare philosophical acumen and scholarship. His criticisms and suggestions were extremely valuable. At the same time I alone am to be held responsible for the views hereinafter expressed, for some of which, indeed, I cannot pledge the support of all the friends named. Finally, I should like to record my indebtedness to the continuous sympathy and support of my wife in all my work.

E. W. HIRST.

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*July, 1935.*

# Jesus and the Moralists

## CHAPTER I

### JESUS AND MORALITY

At the outset of our discussion we are faced with at least two objections of a somewhat contradictory character. It is urged, on the one hand, that the teaching of Jesus on conduct is so completely like that of other teachers that it is unnecessary to undertake the task of comparison. On the other hand, it is said that His teaching is in certain respects so much unlike that of the moralists, strictly so-called, that no real comparison is possible. We hope that the review which follows will show that the teaching of Jesus on conduct was sufficiently like, and yet sufficiently unlike, the theories of the moralists as to make the comparison which we are now undertaking not only possible, but useful and desirable.

We readily admit that the content of the Christian ethic is far from being entirely original. This is not a fact to be regretted; it is rather a ground of satisfaction. For had the teaching of Jesus on conduct been entirely new, it would surely have been eccentric. The Christian believes that man is made in the image of God, and therefore holds that man is made for morality, and that in his inevitable quest for truth during the ages he has, under Divine Providence, in some measure attained it. And indeed we have evidence that at a very early period in the history of the race man had realized the importance of sound principles of conduct. According to some investiga-

tors the moral development of Egypt was considerably advanced as early as 3000 B.C. The Book of the Dead anticipates many of the commands of the Decalogue. Then, again, the Golden Rule is widespread as well as ancient, being found in Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Hellenism.

Of the approximations to the Christian ethic among ancient peoples we have a striking example in the teaching of the Chinese philosopher, Mo Tse, who lived between the periods of Confucius and Mencius, i.e. from about 468 B.C. to 382 B.C. He traced all evil to one root, viz. selfishness, and enunciated the Golden Rule in a positive form and with probably a universal application. He said: 'Regard everyone else as you would yourself and look upon the things of others as you would look upon your own.'

It is, however, when we come to pre-Christian Jewish literature that we find the most remarkable anticipations of the teaching of Jesus on conduct. In the Apocryphal writings there are warnings against covetousness, unjust gain, hypocrisy, pride, hatred, adultery. Justice to the poor and needy is inculcated. Almsgiving is praised. The most remarkable approximation to the Christian ethic occurs in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*—a book written, presumably, in the last quarter of the second century B.C. Of this book Dr. R. H. Charles says: 'It is the sole representative of the loftiest ethical standard ever attained by pre-Christian Judaism . . . and the natural preparation for the ethics of the New Testament and especially of the Sermon on the Mount.' And he ventures to add that 'this book influenced directly the Sermon on the Mount in a few of its most striking thoughts and phrases.' It is in this book that we find for the first time in literature<sup>1</sup> the union of the two commands to love God and to love our neighbour. On the subject of the forgive-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. Maldwyn Hughes, *Ethics of the Apocrypha*, p. 54.

ness of enemies it has been remarked that the parallels in thought and diction between the Testament of Gad and the teaching of Jesus are so close that we must assume our Lord's acquaintance with that book.<sup>1</sup> What, then, shall we say about the 'originality' of the ethical teaching of Jesus?

Its originality was not so much in its content as in its *note of authority*, its *emphases*, and its *religious setting*. There was a note of authority which was new. Buddha arrived at 'truth' only after painful search and prolonged meditation. The classical moralists of Greece developed their theories of life and conduct in a framework of complicated argument. Jesus does not come by His knowledge after anxious reflection or through a process of dialectic. On the contrary, when He taught in the temple His wisdom excited wonder because, as it was said, 'He had never learned.'<sup>2</sup> He set Himself above all the traditions of the elders which had hitherto been the models for conduct. All that had been said of old time was declared to be of inferior authority, against which He placed His own authority. 'I say unto you' was the formula by which He introduced His doctrine—a procedure which to the Jews of His day must have seemed not only revolutionary, but worse. This *ipse dixit* of Jesus does not, of course, imply that the innate conscience of mankind is superseded. For it is that conscience to which the appeal of His teaching is made and by which it is ultimately vindicated.

Further, there were certain *emphases* in Jesus' teaching which, if not absolutely new, were, by reason of their special stress, tantamount to originality. There was, of course, the emphasis on the ethical and spiritual in pre-

<sup>1</sup> Gad. iv. 3, 'Love ye one another from the heart, and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile: and if he repent and confess forgive him.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark iv. 2, 'Many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things, and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him . . . ?'



ference to the ceremonial.<sup>1</sup> There was, in addition, the particular attitude towards woman, which may be regarded as the acid test of the quality of any moral system. It was a characteristic of Jewish, Hebrew, Semitic and Oriental thought generally that woman was presumed to be inferior in status to man. Polygamy and concubinage were traditional in the pre-Christian era of the world. Even where marriage was an institution, divorce was rife, often on the most trivial grounds. Jesus was unusually explicit in His condemnation of divorce, and in His insistence that marriage should be monogamous and permanent. In all that He said and did there is nothing to indicate that woman was in any other position than that of an equality of status with man. But as to Jesus' pioneer teaching on the relationship of the sexes there is no more impressive testimony than that of one of the most cultured Jewish writers of the present day, who says: 'The attitude of Jesus towards women is very striking. He breaks through Oriental limitations in more directions than one. For (1) He associates with, and is much looked after by women in a manner which was unusual. (2) He is more strict about divorce. (3) He is also more merciful and compassionate. He is a great champion of womanhood. And in His combination of freedom and pity, as well as in His strict attitude to divorce, He makes a new departure of enormous significance and importance. If He had done no more than this, He might justly be regarded as one of the great teachers of the world.'<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the emphasis on certain details of conduct is Jesus' stress on *motive*. This, of course, is not peculiar to the Christian ethic, but it is so prominent as to be characteristic. Wherefore, Christian morality has been described as an ethic of inwardness. According to Jesus,

<sup>1</sup> Specially as contrasted with contemporaneous Judaism.

<sup>2</sup> Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings*, p. 47.

a man may commit murder or adultery in his own heart. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he good or bad.

This stress on motive must not be understood to prejudice the importance of action, i.e. of intention and execution. What a man *does* is important, though not intrinsically so. Indeed an act, when considered in itself and in entire divorce from any motive, is merely an event, and is in itself without ethical quality. Its ethical importance is derived from the motive by which it is impelled. And according to the difference of the impelling motive, so is there a difference in the act regarded in its totality. 'No act exists except in the doing of it, and in the doing of it there is a motive; and you cannot separate the doing of it from the motive without substituting for action in the moral sense action in the physical, mere movement of bodies.'<sup>1</sup>

It follows from all this that care for the motive will imply care for its appropriate expression in action. He who is careful to act from what he feels is a good motive, and yet is careless as to its practical manifestation, is after all defective in the very region of motivation. To Jesus, motive was nothing less than the attitude of the whole man. Psychologically speaking, motive presents the three aspects of thought, feeling, and will.

It is, however, necessary to state a little more explicitly the bearing of motive on *act*. We have already seen that an act considered in itself apart from an agent is a mere *event*, which, in itself, has no ethical quality and can therefore be called neither right nor wrong. Witch-burning in itself is a mere event. Witches might be killed by accident; their bodies might be dreadfully mangled by a fall, or they might be burnt by the accidental conflagration of their own homes. When we call witch-burning 'wrong' it is because it is an intentional act which is in direct relation to the motive of some agent. The infliction of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. W. B. Joseph, *Some Problems in Ethics*, p. 38.

pain is not of necessity ethically wrong in itself. It is the reason for the infliction which makes it right or wrong. Hence we acquit the surgeon of the moral blame which, on the other hand, we ascribe to the inquisitor who tortures his victim on the rack.<sup>1</sup>

The Christian ethic lays the supreme stress on motive. Not, as we say, that it is indifferent to the importance of action. The ethical quality of the act, however, as being right or wrong is determined by the motive to which it is related. The relation between what is done and the reason why it is done is, so to speak, organic. The act is such an expression of the motive as is thought to be suitable. The act may not, in fact, be really suitable inasmuch as the process of thought is prone to fallacy.

This view of the right and wrong in action is to be distinguished from another view, favoured by what is called ideal utilitarianism, according to which acts are designed not to express motive so much as to bring about consequences in the future which will realize the good life. From this standpoint acts become a means to an end beyond themselves, and goodness is something in the future to which a series of acts in the present is expected to contribute.<sup>2</sup> Morality is thus 'purposive' in a sense which the Christian ethic would not admit. The righteousness of the Christian is a present possession. The Kingdom of Heaven and beatitude are his.

We have said that acts get their moral quality as being right or wrong by their relation to motive. A right act is the fit expression of a good motive. Now inasmuch as any act has in many directions practically infinite

<sup>1</sup> Hence we differ, with all respect, from Dr. W. D. Ross, who says that 'rightness . . . belongs to acts *not* in virtue of the motives they proceed from but in virtue of the nature of what is done.' Cf. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, p. 156. Dr. W. Temple, commenting on this doctrine of the 'rightness' of acts says: 'It is clear that in the act thus detached (i.e. from its social context) there is no *good*; but it seems to me equally clear that there is nothing to be meant by calling it *right*.' *Nature, Man, and God*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the criticism of Professor J. L. Stocks, *The Limits of Purpose*.

consequences such as no finite intelligence could foresee or individual will control, only God in His omnipotence and omniscience could secure an expression of motive that was perfectly and ideally 'fit.' Such objective fitness of expression is, of course, beyond mortal man, nor is he under obligation to achieve it.<sup>1</sup> Some ultra-subtle thinkers suggest that if knowledge of the absolutely right act, as just explained, is impossible to us we are released from duty altogether. But such scepticism carried to its logical conclusion would preclude acts of any sort—even the physical act of writing the criticism referred to, inasmuch as we never could be sure that the factors required for the continuance of the work during the necessary moments of time would be operative. Of course we all must live by faith, informed as far as possible by intelligence. In regard to moral action fitness of expression of motive must be confined within comparatively narrow limits. Clearly no individual can be held responsible for what may be called the *secondary* consequences of his deeds, consequences, that is to say, which others contribute to bring about. Surely it is only the proximate and immediate effects of his acts with which he is concerned, and with these so far as he can foresee and control them. These he must make harmonious with his motives. His success in this will depend partly upon his use of the experience of the community, and partly upon his own discernment. Those who thought it right to burn witches or to torture heretics for the glory of God were clearly influenced by the defective discernment of their day. This, however, did not excuse their own failure in discernment. Now a failure in discernment is in the last analysis really a failure in the region of motive. That torture and cruelty should be thought compatible with zeal for God and the souls of

<sup>1</sup> Accordingly we cannot accept the statement of Dr. W. D. Ross when he says: 'The right act for me is . . . the act which, if I were omniscient, I should see to be my duty.'—*The Right and the Good*, p. 32.

the victims could proceed only from a motive of which the emotional aspect had been developed at the expense of the intellectual.

As time passes, however, the moral culture of the race progresses, and can be appropriated by the individual for his own guidance. The New Testament, however, stresses the importance of the individual's own development of his powers of discernment. The first disciples were bidden to combine the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. And the Apostle Paul, writing to the Philippians (ch. i. 9), prays that their love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all discernment, or judgement (aesthesis). Just as the ardour of the lover tends to quicken his judgement of the needs of the object of his devotion, so spiritual love sharpens and refines the judgement in regard to its manner of expression in act. Of course stupidity can work much havoc in the world. So-called 'good' people can, and do, blunder. But in the long run the obstinate evil of the world is due much more to want of heart than to lack of thought. Ideally, heart and thought render each other mutual assistance.

Another distinctive feature in Jesus' attitude to morality was the definitely *religious setting* in which He placed conduct. Strictly speaking, Jesus was not a moralist; His primary mission was to reveal God as the Father and Redeemer of mankind. By that revelation, however, He declared the nature of God to be Love manifesting itself to sinful man as Grace.<sup>1</sup> He showed that this Divine Love was behind the phenomena of Nature and human life and history. God's Love sent the sunshine and the rain, noticed the fall of the sparrow, sorrowed over human suffering and sin, and rejoiced over the penitent sinner. And Jesus presented this Divine Love in its impartiality, patience, and mercifulness as a pattern for man's imitation in his

<sup>1</sup> 'It is the doctrine of grace that is so original,'—Flew, *The Idea of Perfection*, p. 20.

dealings with his fellows. In this way Jesus' revelation of God involved ethical as well as theological doctrine.

There have, of course, been ethical systems which in different ways have been based on metaphysics or theology. Platonism, for instance, found its basis for conduct in the 'Idea of the Good.' Kant postulated God as a necessity for the perfection of his theory. But in neither of these systems was there anything like that organic relation between ethics and theology which we see in the teaching of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Jesus never argued from the *is* to the *ought*, or from the *ought* to the *is*. The two concepts were for Him identical. The valuable was the ultimately real, and the ultimately real was the valuable. For Him the world was Divine: it was the abode of His Father: it was the expression of Creative Love. The phenomena of Nature were not mere facts—day unto day uttered speech, and their language was that of love. The very moments as they passed with unbroken rhythm bespoke the constancy of Divine care. As for man, he was, said Jesus, God's child. As a child of the Father he must learn to lisp the cosmic language, and speak and act in imitation of Divine love. He should behave towards his fellows as a fellow-member of a Divine family.

However, a distinction is to be drawn between love in God and love in man. God's love is not ethical in the sense of its being controlled by an imperative. God is not a subject of duty.<sup>2</sup> Man, by contrast, is a being exposed to temptation, and prone to err. Hence, love, in his case, is an *ethical* demand; it is an obligation.

Further, as far as man is concerned, the sphere of the ethical is *inter-human*. If religion is what a man does with his solitariness, according to the description of a

<sup>1</sup> 'There is little or nothing in his (Plato's) writings about the personal relation of man to God, which is such an important element in Christian religious experience.'—Professor G. C. Field in *Philosophy*, IX, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kant's conception of a 'holy' Will,

famous philosopher-scientist,<sup>1</sup> then ethics is what a man does with his sociality. Sometimes it is said that a man's 'duty' is to love God and not only his fellow-men. But such a duty is of the nature of worship, and the attitude in worship is religious rather than ethical. For, after all, man cannot love God in any sense of rendering service, or of enriching His personality. On the contrary, the presupposition of worship is that its object is perfect. Moreover, it would be irrelevant to say that man's 'duty' is to be religious and worshipful, inasmuch as by general agreement man is a being who is religious by nature. When worship is spoken of as a 'duty,' the term is usually used in reference to the incidents and details of acts of worship. Of course, the instinct of worship, if for the moment the word instinct may be used, may be, and in fact often is, perverted. All sorts of idols are erected by man, and made into objects of devotion, whether they be graven images or the more sophisticated gods of wealth, fame, or success. The command to worship, as we have it in the Decalogue, really amounts to a solemn exhortation to substitute for a debasing idolatry a supreme reverence for Yahweh. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve.' The truth is that worship is natural to man, but is apt to be tragically misdirected. But 'worship, though it cannot be achieved by effort, can be evoked and attached to its most satisfying object.'<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons man's love of God must be distinguished from his love of his fellow men. The former is a religious, the latter, an ethical attitude. On the inter-human plane love implies mutual enrichment of personalities, and active service, each of the other. And it can be and is commanded. The command to love God with all our mind, soul, and strength is given in quasi-ethical

<sup>1</sup> Professor A. N. Whitehead.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. K. E. Kirk, *The Threshold of Ethics*, p. 167, and indeed the whole of his valuable Chapter VI on 'Religion.'

language, but the ideal attitude to God as supreme remains dissimilar from the ideal attitude to one's fellow.

And yet the ethical attitude of man to his neighbour is not only born of the religious attitude, as we have already said, but finds its goal in the creation and nurture of that same religious attitude in other men. Not only does the love of God teach us to love our fellows, but we adequately love our fellow-man only when we help to furnish him, not merely with the different forms of material good, but with the supreme spiritual riches. In short, our duty is to beget in him that same adoration of the Divine Love which is our own practice and inspiration. Clearly the supreme task, whether of self or neighbour, is to attain complete adjustment to reality as a whole; or, in religious language, to gain the vision of God.<sup>1</sup> Thus, not only does ethics arise out of religion, but it is in religion that it finds its consummation. The love of neighbour, like the love of self, is a love of him for the sake of the supreme love—viz. the love of God.<sup>2</sup> It follows that there is such a thing as a Christian self-love. The Christian should love himself, not of course for his own sake, but as being the child of the Heavenly Father; and should solemnly seek the well-being of his own body, mind and soul, that he may be the better qualified to serve God and his fellow-men. His interest in himself is therefore unlike the Butlerian self-love, which was a principle leading a man to 'maximize his own total happiness in the long run.' Christian self-love is not primarily an interest in one's own happiness at all, but rather a supreme concern for our religious vocation and opportunity. But, further, in this love, whether of ourselves or our neighbours in relation to God, there is the recognition that we are not

<sup>1</sup> This is the theme of Dr. K. E. Kirk's Bampton Lecture, *The Vision of God*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament*, p. 97.



only creatures, but unworthy children. The realization of this unworthiness in the sight of God affects the nature of our love.

The word *love* in our English language is very much overworked. It is used for those more or less involuntary types of affection, like sex and friendship, which have their source in natural instinct, and are stimulated by physical, mental, or temperamental attractions. Love also describes that general sociality which is equally instinctive and natural. But so transcendent of these age-long varieties is the spiritual affection of the Christian brotherhood that in the New Testament a new and specific substantive is used to designate it, viz. *agapē*.<sup>1</sup> The love called *agapē* is a love which rises above all ties of blood, or culture, or country. We do not mean that from the psychological point of view it is quite independent of the sociality which is part of the very nature of man. It may be said to be based upon it, and therefore to use it in that sense. But it is certainly a sublimated form of human sociality, and therefore is distinct. If to distinguish it we need a special epithet—then we may call it *Evangelical* love.

We must now try to characterize a little more precisely this evangelical love of self and neighbour.<sup>2</sup> It is, of course, *voluntary* in type, and not merely instinctive. Again, it is neither purely egoistic nor purely altruistic. In other words, it is an exclusive love neither of self nor of others, but it is *communal*—embracing the highest interests of self and of others together.<sup>3</sup> Its distinctiveness, however, arises from its *religious* motive. And that motive is from the emotional point of view a blend of sorrow and joy, based on the recognition of each other's need and

<sup>1</sup> A 'new' substantive in the sense that it was only just coming into use as a term of religious love, probably because it was free from the associations of *philia* and *erōs*.

<sup>2</sup> We expound this again in the last chapter.

<sup>3</sup> We agree that it is not developed from instinctive sociality by any mere 'broadening out' of its range. Cf. Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Eng. tr., p. 230.

each other's privilege. We have a common creaturehood—we are all alike frail in respect of our weakness and mortality. In comparison with the vast forces of the cosmos, in comparison with the omnipotence of the Creator, we are defenceless. Our defencelessness at birth, in childhood, in age, in sickness, in adversity, in death, cries out to our fellow-humans; and love hearing the cry tries to respond. But we cry to one another, not as creatures only but as sinners. In this case we are all alike helpless. Whose love can heal a broken heart or a guilty conscience? But there is a love sufficient to meet our sins and the sins of our fellows—the love of God in Christ. Inspired and benefited by such a love, we can bring the power of it to each other, and in all our sorrows rejoice with joy exceeding and full of glory. Therefore the love which we bring to each other as Christians is a love full of humility, full also of gratitude, and full of a common joy in a common mercy.

It seems to me that Professor Nygren is right when he says,<sup>1</sup> 'The love of one's neighbour ceases to be a Christian's love if it is separated from its religious context . . . Christian love for one's neighbour springs from the same root as Christian love to God—namely the experience of the Divine Agapē . . . Christian love is a reflection of God's own love; in this it has its pattern and its basis.' We learn from the Divine exercise of mercy towards ourselves to exhibit a like patience and forbearance and forgiveness to each other. Our own love of *ourselves* in our sin and unworthiness, if it is really Christian love, should be a reflection of the love of God—both in its sternness and in its mercy. In Christian self-love there is a humility, and yet a sense of dignity, that is appropriate to an unworthy child of God who, however, rejoices in the Divine mercy. In believing in Christian self-love I differ from Professor Nygren, who thinks that the idea

<sup>1</sup> Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, pp. 68, 69 (S.P.C.K.).

of self-love is alien to the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> Surely not. What nobler attitude can any man assume towards himself than to regard himself as a redeemed child of God? Self-love of that kind is, alas! all too rare. And the attitude towards one's neighbour is of the same lofty kind. To seek to make him happy is good as far as it goes; but to lead him to enjoy the sense of Christian sonship—that is the acme of beneficence. Such, then, is the nature of evangelical love; it is based on the redemptive love of God as its inspiration, and adopts it as far as it can as its model.

It was the purpose of Jesus to establish a community of persons animated by such a spirit and exercising such a love. The old Hebrew conception of such an ideal society was that of a theocracy, Yahweh being the supreme King, and His loyal subjects forming His Kingdom. And the phrase 'Kingdom of God' was the traditional description in Jesus' day of such a society.<sup>2</sup> As it was in current use, He employed it Himself; He could hardly do otherwise. Indeed in the worship of the synagogue God was thought of as a sovereign. When, however, you find what the community implied by this 'Rule of God' is really like—that, in fact, it is the sphere of the humble, the pure-hearted, the merciful, the gentle, the devout—you realize that though the old terminology is being still used, its meaning is so different from that aforetime that the significance of the term 'Kingdom' has radically changed. Jesus' view of the relation of God to man is not theocratic, with its suggestion of coercion from the Divine side and of the tendency to rebel on the part of man. On the contrary, He thinks of the perfect society as forming a household—a veritable family of God. Apart from the Gospel of Matthew, written more especially for Jews, there is

<sup>1</sup> This is discussed more fully in the last chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The primary meaning of *Basileia* appears to be kingship; a kingdom, however, in which this kingship rules, if a secondary idea, is necessarily implied.

in the New Testament a tendency for the regal aspect of God's relation to man to recede into the background.<sup>1</sup> Even in Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount the term 'Father' occurs seventeen times. In the twelfth chapter of that Gospel (vv. 46-50) Jesus declares that whosoever will do the will of the Father becomes with Him a member of the Divine family and ranks as His brother, and sister, and mother.

Note this 'whosoever,' for entrance into God's family is open to all without exception of colour, race, station, or capacity. Of such universalism there are suggestions, of course, in earlier seers and writers. Though Confucius never conceived the Golden Rule as applying outside China, if indeed beyond his native province of Shantung, yet a later Chinese seer, Mo Tse (b. 468 B.C.) seems to have taught a universal love. There is also evidence of universalism in the Stoic doctrine of world-citizenship. In Philo, again, there is a breadth of outlook wonderful in a Jew. By contrast Hebrew and Jewish ethics were parochial. To the Hebrew the idea of 'neighbour,' if it went farther than fellow-Israelite, included only the resident alien. Jesus, however, set no bounds of race or clime to the scope of love. Christian love is universal in its reach. It loves man as man; or, to use Seeley's expression, it loves 'the man in all men,' and it loves him in and for God in Christ.

Such, then, is the nature and scope of what we have called 'evangelical love.' We have seen how intimately connected is this love of man with the love of God in Christ. The connexion is made by means of what the New Testament calls 'faith.' 'While the sublimest expression of God's attitude to man and man's to his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Garvie, *The Christian Ideal for Human Society*, pp. 42-4. 'The Rule of God implies a community ruled, but it is never to be identified with the human beings who enter that rule. Hence the Kingdom is always to be distinguished from the *ecclesia*.'—R. N. Flew, *The Idea of Perfection*, p. 11.

fellow-man is in terms of love, when a word is required to express the right attitude of man to God or Christ "love" is rarely used, "faith" being the natural word. . . . Jesus preferred faith as a deeper expression of man's relation to God. Trust in the Divine love and power was evidently a more adequate term than love, in His mind. And reflection justifies this. For we cannot speak of loving God in precisely the same sense as we speak of loving one another.'<sup>1</sup> In short, the difference between faith and love is that the emphasis of the former is Godward, of the latter, manward. Nevertheless, the relationship of faith and love, as these are exercised by man, is that of dual aspects of one and the same attitude. For faith is both wrought by, and expresses itself in, love. It is wrought by love in the sense that there is enough love in man to impel him to seek and, if he finds, to trust the love of God in Christ. Deep calls unto deep. On the other hand, love in the seeking soul manifests its appreciation of Divine love by striving to shed abroad in others a similar faith in God and by rendering all possible service which might lead to it.

The Christian ethic, then, is in the above sense an ethic of *Faith*. It is therefore in contrast with all those humanistic systems of morality of which we shall pass some in review, and of which the Greek doctrine of virtue is a conspicuous example. To the Greeks, speaking generally, virtue was a human achievement, and comparable to a work of art. The goodness of the Christian is his own, and yet not his own. His virtues are fruits of the Spirit, and are so many 'graces' of character. In the growth of this character he works together with God. This co-operation of the Divine and the human accounts for certain paradoxical features in the ethical experience of the Christian. Whereas the Kantian ethic presumes the ability to carry it out ('I ought' implies 'I can') the

<sup>1</sup> Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament*, p. 94.

Christian ethic recognizes human insufficiency. The Divine assistance is therefore an essential part of the Christian scheme of conduct. By means of God's grace the Christian is 'able to do all things.' In so far, therefore, as he relies on the Divine help, he is justified in having confidence, and courage, and the assurance of attainment. But man knows himself to be weak, and his grasp of Divine aid to be frail. His doubts about himself have been only too often justified by his record of failure. So when the Christian is confronted by the demands of the ideal, he is conscious both of ability and inability. He feels able, and yet unable. In God's strength he can; in his own he cannot. Wherefore any goodness attained by him is due, not to himself alone, perhaps not to himself so much, but especially to the grace of God working in him. Hence his goodness, while on the one hand redounding to the glory of God, is on the other hand a reason for his own humility. Thanks to Divine aid, he is sufficient for all things; but his sufficiency is not a self-sufficiency—not *autarkeia*—and is quite compatible with lowliness of spirit. Boasting, indeed, is excluded. When in Phil. iv. 11 the Apostle uses the Stoic term and declares that he is 'sufficient' in every condition, he implies (v. 13) that his sufficiency is 'in Christ.'

Such humility has been said to mark the cleavage between Greek and Christian ideals. It will appear in subsequent chapters that in Aristotle high-mindedness was a virtue, and that by the Stoics the attitude of independence was idealized. Humility in the sense of unworthiness was certainly not conspicuous, if indeed it was not wholly lacking. Humility arising from a sin-consciousness pervades many of the Psalms of the Old Testament, and reveals the contrast between the Greek and the Jewish points of view. The lowliness of the Christian arises from his sense of helplessness apart from the Divine mercy revealed in Jesus Christ. Having no goodness of his own

he is daily a debtor to the grace of God. Such a realization of indebtedness is an essential element in the experience even of the mature Christian. The constituent factors in the humility of those who have attained what we may call evangelical perfection have been fully set forth by Dr. R. N. Flew in his scholarly work.<sup>1</sup>

According, then, to the teaching of Jesus, morality is simply the *manward* expression of piety. It is, in other words, the love of man for God in response to His mercy manifesting itself in a supreme endeavour to bring his neighbour to the realization of a similar love for God. The aim, therefore, is primarily not to make either ourselves or our neighbour merely happy. Nor is it even to do what is called 'right.' The right, as we saw, is simply the fit expression of motive, and as the motive is to beget in others as in ourselves the attitude of piety, 'right' actions are such as are designed to accomplish that end. Accordingly it is, so far, right to furnish ourselves and our neighbours with all the material instruments that are necessary for life in this world. If our neighbour is thirsty, we must give him drink; if he is hungry, we must feed him; if he is naked we must clothe him. But our love to him must not be exhausted by these services. It is right to pay our debts to him. If we have borrowed a book from him—I take this illustration because Dr. Ross has used it exhaustively in his work, *The Right and the Good*)—we must do our best to return it. But supposing he receives once again the book which he has lent, what then? What, after all, is a book? What, after all, are food and clothes? I mean in comparison with the supreme needs of our neighbour. If our one supreme need is to adjust ourselves to the Divine mercy, do we really do what is right by our neighbour if we stop short at rendering him merely material forms of service? If that is what is meant by doing 'right,' then it is from the

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology*, pp. 408seq.

Christian standpoint an inadequate form of service to our neighbour. For we have left his highest life unprovided for, unnourished. If we elicit love from him, so far so good. But the love which we should especially try to draw forth is the love of the God and Father of us all.

At this point it may be thought that we have opposed too sharply the love that is philanthropic and that which is spiritual. Lest we should seem in any way to belittle human kindness we hasten to add that in a universe which is the expression of Divine love the different forms of love cannot be rigidly separated, though a distinction may be made between them. If one gives but a cup of cold water to the needy, such a deed has also a certain spiritual significance. It is not merely that any gift of love is ultimately traceable to God who is the source of all love, and who formed human nature in His image; it is because any loving act is in its degree an imitation of Him who gives us every kind of good. And what wondrous instances of self-sacrifice are to be placed to the credit of men and women who in their devotion to others seem to have no ultimate spiritual aim! However, brotherly-kindness, besides uniting men one to another, tends to make men more sensitive than otherwise they would be to the reality of a Divine love. 'When we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, cheer the miserable, heal and tend the sick, we do more than relieve misery and produce happiness, more even than provide the conditions for renewed health and activity; we encourage both in ourselves and in those we succour the growth of love, and love is the principle of eternal life and the very being of God.'<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless the Christian view of what is 'right' is that the 'right' act is not an end in itself. It is merely a pious instrument, a religious service. Everything that is done is for the promotion of the love of God. The Christian must so act towards others as to spread the holy

<sup>1</sup> F. A. M. Spencer, *The Ethics of the Gospel*, p. 231.



contagion of his piety. In all he does he must suggest the Father. As a son of God he must, nay he will, strive to promote the filial attitude in all his deeds. Such an aim seems to be implied in the command: 'Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven.' Accordingly the 'right' act for a Christian requires, not merely the help that comes from the moral experience of others, or from the exercise of his own discernment, but above all the manifestation of a certain spirit—in short it must be an act of piety.

This point of view we strive to create when we say a grace before beginning a meal; when we solemnize a marriage in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; when in doing business in the market-place we trade in the presence of the market-cross and inspired by its divine significance. In sight of such a symbol men lose sight of honesty for its own sake—they gain a glimpse of an ideal of life even nobler than the moral, because it includes the moral and much more. They regard life as sacramental—as an offering of devotion to the sacrificial love of God.

One cannot conclude this brief account of the teaching of Jesus on conduct without distinguishing the attitude of Jesus from that of the theorist in ethics. The primary concern of the theorist *qua* theorist is to investigate and understand the nature of the good life.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to read the Gospels without realizing that the aim of Jesus is something more than this. His is a pre-eminently practical aim. He desired to *make* men good. For this He lived; for this He died. For this He ever works through the Eternal Spirit. Accordingly He warns men of the temptations that beset the good life: He promises His aid in the fight for the ideal. And especially He declares a

<sup>1</sup>It is not meant that some moralists have not been more than theorists.

message of forgiveness to those who have failed and fallen in the fight. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Hence His teaching is called a Gospel—indeed the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Now it is this practical aim of Jesus which has evoked certain criticisms from some of those who are interested in the theory of conduct. Some regard this doctrine of divine help—the doctrine of grace—as inconsistent with the independence of the human will. Others dispute the ‘morality’ of this gift of forgiveness. Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, for instance, in the Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, while giving his general approval to the moral elements in the teaching of Jesus, would free it from all taint, as he puts it, of the Pauline soteriology. In particular, he condemns salvationism as a ‘cheap buying off of Divine justice.’

Fully to deal with these criticisms would take us into the realms of the philosophy of religion and Christian theology. We will merely content ourselves with pointing out that the help of the Spirit of God is so far from compromising our moral freedom that most of us are daily receiving spiritual stimulus from the lives of other men (especially from those whom we have learned to love and trust) without any disintegration of our personalities. In both cases the strength of another becomes our own strength through the co-operation of our own will. A well-known example of this power of influence is the nobility and purity which Tennyson declares that he derived from the departed spirit of his friend Hallam:

Whatever way my days decline,  
I felt and feel, tho’ left alone,  
His being working in mine own,  
The footsteps of his life in mine.

And as little disintegrating to the personality of man are the strength and purity which come from the spirit of Christ.

Those who think that it is unethical for man to accept Divine forgiveness for his sin do not appear to us fully to understand the implications either of sin or of repentance. To regard salvation as a 'cheap buying off of Divine justice,' is to take what we may call a merely legalistic view of goodness; it is to regard morality as consisting only of commandments, failure to observe which may be excused. The idea that goodness consists of so many duties is an external conception of morality which is far transcended in the New Testament. Our brief review of the teaching of Jesus will have shown, we trust, that morality is nothing less than the manward expression of our devotion to the love of God, who is our Maker, Father, and Redeemer; in a word, it is sonship with brotherhood. Therefore, as a sinner, man has not to seek to put himself right with a *law* which he has violated, or to have his violation or neglect overlooked. It is a person, even a Divine, with whom he has to do; it is a person, even a Divine, whom by his sin he has wronged. And his wrong consists in the withdrawal of his love from the Creative Love that begat him, and as a Father sustains him. In the nature of the case, the Father's claim to devotion from His child cannot be 'bought off.' The attempt to 'buy it off' would indicate that the whole situation was misconceived, and that the nature of repentance was not understood. Clearly in this case repentance is much more than regret for the violation of law. 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,' said the Psalmist long ago, who also knew that the 'sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.'<sup>1</sup> The relationship throughout is a relationship of persons; it is that of the prodigal in tears before his Father. The goal is reconciliation with Heavenly love. As the aim of repentance and faith is a renewal of the filial attitude of devotion to the Divine love, the Divine forgiveness that welcomes it is *ethically* condi-

<sup>1</sup> Psalm li.

tioned. God can take back to His heart only those who really seek His love. Not only is this Divine reconciliation ethically conditioned, but its effects also are ethical. The feeling of inhibition from good is removed; devotion to the Divine love is increased; the urge to do good becomes stronger. Whatever may be the temporal consequences of sins that are past, these are borne with a new heart and spirit. They have ceased to be regarded as penal. So transmuted do they become to the mind of the forgiven that they are changed into a veritable means of grace.<sup>1</sup> 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.' (Rom. iii. 31.)

Before concluding this chapter it seems desirable to deal with the objection raised in some quarters that the ethical teaching of Jesus is not of permanent validity; that it was of merely temporary application in view of His expectation that the end of the world was imminent. Clearly there was an eschatological background to His teaching. It is said that His ethic was accordingly one of patience and endurance and extreme asceticism in view of the Apocalypse, and that 'either the principles of His teaching or its application, or both, would have been quite other than they are, had He not believed in the immediate end of the existing world-order.'

An examination of the words of Jesus is, we think, far from bearing out the extreme eschatological theory, at least in its ethical inferences. In them there is no despair of the world; on the contrary, Jesus declared that by His death He would draw all men to Himself. He was full of hope for the future. No doubt in the Gospels there are strange apocalyptic prophecies which present a problem to scholars. But there are so many other features which are incompatible with the theory of an

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. S. Bezzant on 'Ethics and Religion' in *Personal Ethics*. Cf. also Davison, *The Christian Conscience*, p. 167.

*Interimsethik* that mention must now be briefly made of them.

There is a definite statement to the effect that the Kingdom was already come: 'The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say Lo here! or Lo there! for behold the Kingdom of God is within you.'<sup>1</sup> Moreover, proof that the Kingdom had come was, He said, the casting out of devils.<sup>2</sup>

That Jesus regarded the Kingdom as also capable of gradual development is clear from the parables of the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, the Wheat and the Tares, the Seed growing secretly.

Jesus would naturally speak about the Judgement to come. If He seemed to refer to it sometimes as though it were imminent, its imminence, if not literally true, is, however, true in a greater sense; it is true in a moral and religious sense. Where a judgement of human souls is concerned, its date is an altogether secondary consideration, since the whole matter belongs to a region that transcends time, viz. to the region of the spiritual world and its values. From this highest point of view the Judgement is always at hand; and every man should live every day as though it were his last. The words of Jesus on the Last Things are intelligible enough on this supposition without the need of the further hypothesis of the speedy end of the world. Accordingly, all that Jesus said about being watchful, about being diligent in the management of talents and of pounds in view of the early return of the landlord; the injunction against laying up treasure upon earth; the commands to give all, to resist not evil, to forgive enemies—all these do not depend for their truth only upon the hypothesis of a quick preparation

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> A convincing solution of the problem created by the undoubted eschatological teaching of the Gospels is that suggested by Dr. W. F. Howard, who regards the present manifestations of the Kingdom in men's hearts as the sample or forecast of the general *Advent* to come. See esp. Dr. R. N. Flew, *op. cit.*, Chap. I.

for the end. An ethic of this latter kind, indeed, would be of a rather low type. It would be a system of insurance, an enlightened form of self-interest, and therefore alien to the spirit of Jesus. The hard sayings which deal with family ties, riches, non-resistance, and forgiveness of enemies are, as has been said, quite compatible with a long history of the race on this planet. Their truth is not contingent, but intrinsic and essential.

Whatever Jesus' own view of the date of the end of the world may have been, His apparent under-estimate of life's occupations and interests, suggested by His condemnation of anxiety and of concern for the morrow, is in principle a *true* estimate. It is but to place first things first; it is to seek the Kingdom of God in priority to other things which are secondary and will be added; it is to subordinate the material to the spiritual, and the temporal to the eternal. And such an ethic is valid whatever be the duration of the present order. Whether the world goes on for a year or a million years, the foregoing principles will be applicable to the life of men.

However, the most important argument of all for the permanent validity of the Christian ethic is that, in a sense, such an ethic is timeless; timeless, in that it rests for its truth on relationships that transcend time, and which make all reference to dates irrelevant. If our study of the morality of Jesus is correct, then it is the manward expression of devotion to God; it is but the corollary of filiality. Now such sonship, and such brotherhood have no essential connexion with the age of the earth. Whether the history of mankind be destined to be short or long, the duty and privilege of all men remains ever in principle the same. Indeed, should this world be exchanged for a world of another type, we cannot conceive how created spirits could live so as to live aright, except as they worship the Father of their spirits, and promote this Divine communion in their relations with one another.

At the outset of this chapter we observed that from the earliest times humanity has had its moral codes; that its seers and thinkers formed some conception of a social ethic approximating to that of brotherhood. However, the tendency of thought, as we try to show in the chapters that follow, has been either to isolate morality from its traditional connexion with religion, or to regard that association somewhat loosely. Religion has, of course, in different ways kept breaking in, so to speak. The chapter that now closes will have made it clear, we trust, that the Christian ethic is so intimately bound up with religion as to depend upon it for its rationale, to say nothing of its practice. In Christianity the soul's supreme attitude is filial devotion to a God of love, of which brotherly love is, as we have said, but the corollary.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For some of the above-mentioned criticisms of the *Interimsethik* theory I am indebted to sources which I cannot now identify.

## CHAPTER II

### HELLENISM AND THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

OUR study of Hellenic ideals of conduct is based on a brief examination of the ethics of Plato and of Aristotle. For the purpose of a comparison of the ethics of Plato with the teaching of Jesus, we need not concern ourselves with such a question as that of the respective shares of Socrates and Plato in the views usually ascribed to the latter. We will take the name Plato as meaning either the Socratic Plato or the Platonic Socrates.

No more than a very general reference can here be made to the Idealism on which Plato's ethical teaching is founded. According to Plato everything in the world is made after some original and perfect pattern in the supersensible sphere. Corresponding to actual horses and tables there are the ideal horse and the ideal table. These archetypal 'ideas' of things are, at least in the *Republic*, themselves subject to hierarchical control by the 'Idea' or 'Form' of the Good, which is ranged above all other 'ideas.' This pre-eminent Good is an idea in the sense of a commanding principle or supreme value. Plato also describes God as 'the perfectly good soul' who originates all things. At the same time the 'Form of Good' is declared to be the source of all reality. Nevertheless God and the Form of the Good do not appear to be the same. The exact relationship between them is somewhat ambiguous. Prof. A. E. Taylor's view is that here we have an 'unsolved conflict between the Platonic metaphysic and the Platonic religion.'<sup>1</sup> However, there is no doubt

<sup>1</sup> *Plato, the Man and his Work*, 3rd edition, p. 232.



about the main position, which is that goodness is built into the very foundation of things. This truth is the implication of the famous passage in the *Apology* where Socrates says, 'No evil can befall a good man, either in life or in death; nor will the gods forsake him.' Accordingly goodness in man, far from being conventional, is based upon, and endorsed by, a good universe. It is only as the individual moulds his life after the pattern of goodness seen in the heavens that he can be good. Further, it is only as the community embodies the same transcendental ideal in its polity that the State can be called good. As it is in the *Republic* that Plato draws out the meaning of goodness and its intimate connexion with goodness in the community, our exposition of his ethics will naturally be based on the teaching of that great work of which we can supply only the merest sketch.

It is then by conforming to this ideal of transcendental Good that the individual and the State alike become good. Now this transcendental Good is often equated in Plato's thought with the supremacy of Reason in the universe. This Reason is apprehended by that part of man's being which is akin, viz. his intellect (nous); and it is through his reason that man is able to attain to the Good. On this account the rational element in man is called the ruling part (hēgemonikon). And Plato does not shrink from the consequence of making the highest morality possible only to those of the philosophic mind, who are capable of rational insight. At the same time he recognized that the soul was allied with a body, in consequence of which there was present in man's nature a non-rational factor called 'epithumia' or appetite. Between the higher or rational principle and the lower or appetitive element there was a balancing power called 'thumos' or spirit. The Platonic view of the nature of man is thus tripartite—reason, spirit, and appetite. Each of these parts of the soul has its corresponding excellence, wisdom being the

quality that belongs to the right exercise of the reason; courage, the virtuous quality of spirit; temperance, that of appetite. The mention of temperance indicates that Plato realizes the presence and power of forces that may prove subversive of virtue. Accordingly Plato stresses the need for control and internal harmony. There is, it is true, some ambiguity in Plato's references to temperance, especially in the *Republic*, where he seems to identify it with justice. However, temperance and justice may be taken as aspects of one and the same principle, the former the more negative, the latter the more positive. Of course, without control there can be no order or harmony; on the other hand the orderly working of the parts of human nature, as of the classes in the State, necessitates restraint and the principle of subordination. Justice implies, indeed, that the order within the soul of the individual is reflected in the orderly relations of classes in the community. Most Greek philosophers never contemplated the individual man as capable of goodness in isolation. For them the unit was society or the city-state. Hence the individual was looked upon as a social being—in a word, as a citizen.

In the case of Plato, however, there is some controversy on the subject of the exact relation of the individual to the State. True, he always regards the individual in a social setting. But according to some expositors<sup>1</sup> the conduct of the State is described only by way of an illustration of, or an analogy to, the behaviour of the individual. The conduct of the State, as it has been said, 'shows human virtue and vice writ large.' Others,<sup>2</sup> however, relate the individual and the State still more intimately, and maintain that 'the justice of the State is the justice of the individuals who compose it,' with the implication that the former proceeds from the latter. The question will be discussed later whether 'justice' has precisely the same meaning in both

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Taylor, *Plato, the Man and his Work*, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> Nettleship, *Philosophical Remains*, II, p. 68.

cases. It is at any rate Plato's view that the harmony of principle and impulse within the soul will obtain also in an ideal State in respect of the classes in the community which exemplify such principle or impulse. The highest class is composed of the rulers or guardians,<sup>1</sup> who, as possessing reason eminently, are the purveyors of wisdom; next to them come the soldiers or auxiliaries whose particular function it is, as having the quality of 'spirit' in a high degree, to undertake the defence of the State; the lowest class is occupied by the rest of the population and includes all that carry on the economic life of the community, whether as wage-earners, employers, or professional men. All three classes are regarded as bound together by the bond of justice, which ensures that each section of the community does its own work, and at the same time does it for the good of the whole. The obverse side of such justice is regarded as temperance, repressing any tendency to class-usurpation and social disharmony.

It is pointed out that such an organization of the State does not imply any system of caste, inasmuch as it is possible for individuals to secure promotion by merit and to suffer degradation through ill desert.

In the social hierarchy the highest class is composed of those who are endowed with philosophical insight, whose wisdom enables them at once to apprehend the essence of justice and the means of realizing it. Just as in the soul it is only the highest principle, or the reason, which can apprehend the true and ideal Good, so in the State it is only the Guardians, who pre-eminently possess reason, who can do the same. Moreover the guardians, as having special philosophical capacity, have undergone an elaborate educational training. To them, as philosophers, the knowledge of the highest Good is reserved, and its mediation

<sup>1</sup>The 'Rulers' are transferred from the class of ordinary 'Guardians' by a special type of education and may be regarded as 'Perfect Guardians.' Cf. Ritter, *Essence of Plato's Philosophy*, Eng. tr., p. 325.

to the rest of the community committed. The guardians, therefore, attain to a virtue of a superior type; ordinary citizens of the State are called to manifest virtue of an inferior order, described by Plato as popular or civic virtue. Such an ethical dualism anticipates the later distinction made by Aristotle between dianoetic and ethical virtue.

The rulers, said Plato, are to be thoroughly disinterested. In order to ensure this he postulates that they shall be without private possessions. This arrangement, he thought, would prevent disagreements. Accordingly the guardian class (and it seems also the auxiliaries) are to have neither property, wives, nor children:

‘As the guardians have nothing but their persons which they can call their own, suits and complaints will have no existence among them; they will be free from all those quarrels of which money and children and relations are the occasion’ (*Republic*, Book V).

Plato thinks that the sex-bar should not apply in regard to certain positions in the State, and that women should be able to qualify as guardians or as soldiers. Romantic love between the sexes is to be disparaged and suppressed—so far at least as the two higher classes are concerned. Mating is to take place between those couples who may be thought to be the best fitted to be parents of children. Thus procreation is to be made a public service. The children so born are not to know their own parents, but are to be brought up together by the State, and taught to regard one another as belonging to one great family. A common education will ensure equality of opportunity. The differences of capacity that emerge will indicate the classes in the community to which respectively the children should thereafter be assigned.

To sum up—Plato’s conception of an ideal society is such an organization of classes as secures that each class and each individual therein shall function according to his

ability for the common good. On the part of all there must be an unselfish rendering of service in the general interest. In the *Republic* we are given an impressive picture of social harmony and unity in the life of the State, as will appear from the following quotation :

‘That city, then, is best conducted in which the largest proportion of citizens apply the words “mine” and “not mine” similarly to the same objects.’

‘Yes, much the best.’

‘Or, in other words, that city which comes nearest to the condition of an individual man. Thus, when one of our fingers is hurt, the whole fellowship that spreads through the body up to the soul, and there forms an organized unity under the governing principle, is sensible of the hurt, and there is a universal and simultaneous feeling of pain in sympathy with the wounded part : and therefore we say that the man has a pain in his finger.’<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen from the foregoing that Plato draws an analogy between the ideal society and the bodily organism with a view to showing their similarity in respect of perfection of sympathy.

#### COMPARISON OF PLATO’S ETHIC WITH THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC.

Having considered in barest outline Plato’s theory of the good life, individual and social, we will notice first the respects in which it is in accord with the teaching of Jesus.

1. Common to both teachers is what we may term a certain fundamental idealism. Both identify existence in its ultimate nature with value : they regard what finally *is* as good. For Plato, as we have seen, the universe is founded on the ‘Idea’ or ‘Form’ of the Good. Accordingly the task of man is so to organize his life in society as to express this transcendental principle in all his relations. Similarly Jesus taught that God is love, and

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, V, p. 462 (Davies and Vaughan’s trans.).

that man as God's child should manifest this love to his brethren. In other words, morality for both Plato and Jesus is much more than a convention: it is in a sense the very nature and meaning of the universe. Plato is never tired of insisting that it is only as the form of the Good is continually contemplated and applied that man can attain his ideal, either in personal or social life, as the following quotation will illustrate:

'He who has his thoughts truly set on the things that really exist . . . devotes all his time to the contemplation of certain well-adjusted and changeless objects; and beholding how they neither wrong nor are wronged by each other, but are all obedient to order and in harmony with reason, he studies to imitate and resemble them as closely as he can.'<sup>1</sup>

Which reminds us of a saying of Jesus: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Christian conduct is based, in a word, on 'faith'—faith in God as the Father of Jesus Christ working itself out in love for man.

2. Another point of contact between Platonism and Christianity is the close way in which in both systems of thought the life of the individual and that of society are connected. Christianity teaches that the love of self and the love of neighbour should be inter-connected, that the self is realized only in service. Indeed, the ideal society as sketched in the New Testament is called a kingdom, sometimes a city, sometimes a household, of God. The last-named title tended to displace the older Jewish description of a kingdom. Accordingly the spirit that should animate the members, citizens, or inhabitants—whichever designation may be chosen—is a fraternal or communal spirit, as in Plato's ideal commonwealth. We

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, VI, p. 500 (Davies and Vaughan's trans.).

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 48. Ritter quotes a passage from the *Theaetetus* (176b), where the goal of all human endeavour is described as *homoiosis theō*. Op. cit., p. 308.

have already given some extracts from the *Republic* to illustrate this ideal of social harmony. We may here add a remarkable passage from the *Laws*, probably Plato's last work:

'The first and highest form of the State and of the Government and of the law is that in which there prevails most widely the ancient saying that "Friends have all things in common." Whether there is anywhere now, or will ever be, this communion of women and children and of property, in which the private and individual is altogether banished from life, and things which are by nature private, such as eyes and ears and hands, have become common, and all men express praise and blame and feel joy and sorrow on the same occasions, and whatever laws there are unite the city to the utmost—whether all this is possible or not, I say that no man, acting upon any other principle, will ever constitute a State which will be truer or more exalted in virtue. Whether such a State is governed by Gods or sons of Gods, one, or more than one, happy are the men, who, living after this manner, dwell there; and therefore to this we are to look for the pattern of the State, and to cling to this, and to seek with all our might for one which is like this.'<sup>1</sup>

At this point we may fittingly begin the discussion of the main differences between Plato's theory of ethics and the Christian view.

Christianity is not communistic in Plato's sense. Both Plato and Jesus are at one in teaching disinterested service on the part of the members of society; but as to the way in which the love of neighbour is inspired there is between them a wide difference. According to Plato devotion to the good of the whole should regulate the smallest details of the citizens' behaviour. A similar devotion is implied in Christianity by the Golden Rule. But Plato seems to think, as do some moderns, that if you socialize possessions

<sup>1</sup> Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. V, Book V, pp. 121-2.

and institutions you thereby socialize the wills of the members of the community. No doubt property is used selfishly to-day as in Plato's time; no doubt, also, the family tends to become an end in itself, and to function without reference to the common good. But the abolition of all private property or of family life will not cure such selfishness, which will surely break out in some form or other, whatever be the social and political arrangements of the State. It is the view of the *Republic* that a course of education will ensure, at least in a section of the community, a life of disinterested service. Jesus, however, went much deeper than Plato in tracking the source of selfishness, and found it in the 'heart' of man—in what is called 'sin.' Sin is primarily a wrong attitude towards God, and secondarily towards men. Jesus, therefore, demands the regeneration of the soul rather than the socialization of institutions. The first need is a change of the human will; institutions will change as a result. And the means by which this change of heart is effected is 'faith,' i.e. faith in God as the Father of Jesus Christ. God Himself being Love, such faith proceeds from love and is potentially moral. Man's love of his neighbour is itself a result of this supreme love to God: devotion to the All-Father begets devotion to other men as brethren. Under the inspiration of such a love life becomes service, and all the institutions of life are administered in that spirit. The family ceases to be a selfish unit; it becomes a sphere of training for the good of humanity. Property, also, is no longer a means of self-aggrandisement or self-indulgence; it is changed into an instrument of love.

Incidentally, it is difficult to see why Plato should, from his standpoint, exempt the third class in the State from communistic arrangements. It is pointed out that they who do the economic work of the State are allowed private property, and that they live under an individualistic régime. But the community, if it is to function har-



moniously, will require disinterestedness not only in the guardians and auxiliaries, but in the worker section as well. Public spirit will need to be universal.

We have already remarked that it is Plato's view that the harmony which is established between the parts of the soul obtains also in an ideal State between the classes in the community which exemplify them. But here it is necessary to discriminate. Plato would call both instances of harmony 'justice,' whether, as some expositors say, they are analogous, or, as others maintain, are causally connected. There is surely causal connexion in the sense that the goodness of the individual will express itself in social relations with the result that justice between men and classes will be established. But it would seem impossible to attribute justice in this sense to the individual himself apart from society, however good he may be. He, of course, will order harmoniously the impulses of his own nature; but that is a very different task from endeavouring to live in harmony with other men. Indeed it is this very effort to live in harmony with others which will guide the individual in the due regulation of his impulses. Regard for others determines the nature of personal morality. In the Christian ethic the individual unrelated cannot, strictly speaking, be moral. Whatever love he bestows on himself is essentially connected with the love of God and of other men and cannot be severed therefrom. And it is this love of God and of neighbour which preserves the ethical purity of the love of self.

However, the application of justice to social relations is, in the *Republic*, the special province of one class in the State, i.e. the guardians. The other classes cannot apprehend it. They indeed must be content to manifest virtue of an inferior type, virtue which is based on less than the highest knowledge. Only in an indirect way can they share in the wisdom of the guardians. This distinction between grades of virtue is, from the Christian point of

view, wholly obnoxious. In the New Testament all men without exception are invited to the highest life, a life in which morality is merged in religion, in which the love of man is comprehended in the supreme love of God. The only qualification for the enjoyment of this highest life—eternal life, as it is called—is a penitent faith. This qualification can be fulfilled by all without exception. So the appeal of the Gospel is universal; and whosoever will may respond.

We readily acknowledge the fact that Plato's ideal State does not imply a rigid caste system of society, inasmuch as it is possible for a member of a lower class to rise to a position among the guardians. But it nevertheless remains true that the *Republic* favours a caste morality. There is a form of moral excellence which is possible to the few, and impossible to the many. Why this is so we must now inquire. And indeed the reason of it will take us to the very heart of the difference between Platonism and Christianity. That difference is a difference as to the nature of ultimate reality, or the supreme Form of all things. We shall find that the difference in question has to do with the doctrine of personality, or lack of it.

Now the Christian conception of personality lays stress on the will. Whereas Plato stressed the importance of wisdom (rating it so highly that he virtually restricted the highest life to philosophers, who alone possess the native capacity for insight into transcendental principle), Christianity, by contrast, finds the seat of good and evil in the will, and offers the highest life to all who are of good will. A good will, in Christianity, is a will devoted to God, who is conceived as love, and not merely as thought. From the Christian point of view, therefore, all men can be good, and good in the same sense. In Platonism philosophic insight opens up the way to the highest life; but such insight is completely beyond those who are not endowed with native capacity, and who do not go through the

appropriate training in music, gymnastic, and dialectic. One is reminded by contrast of the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' A still more impressive contrast is presented by the first Beatitude of Jesus: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.' Not all can be wise in the Greek sense, but all can be humble in the Christian sense.

How, then, did Plato think of this ultimate form or idea of the Good? He is no Hedonist. He is so far in line with Christianity as to teach that pleasure is no more than an inseparable accident or property of the good life. The Form of Good is therefore not pleasure. In endeavouring to reach Plato's positive doctrine of the Good we shall be helped if we remember his mathematical bias. Plato's ideal Good, then, is sometimes conceived by him as the principle of unity itself, the principle that comprehends and harmonizes the multiplicity that is in the world. Such a principle or form of unity, however, seems a mere abstraction. Plato's 'ideas,' indeed, have been described as 'impersonal principles.' Martineau goes so far as to suggest that they are 'homeless essences having no native claim either on the human or divine mind,' but later<sup>1</sup> thinks that the aforesaid form or principle of unity is a unity for thought. This world-thought is regarded in abstraction from a thinker. Just as Plato conceived of the nature of man as fundamentally reason, so he interpreted the nature of the cosmic principle as reason.

Now the defect of such a conception is radical and far-reaching. Just as it excludes from view the conative aspect of human personality, and magnifies the element of cognition, so likewise is it guilty of a similar partiality in relation to the nature of the world-reason. World-reason

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, i. p. 87 seq., 3rd edition. Plato does not satisfactorily relate God to the Forms of things.

is interpreted in purely intellectual terms. The Universe, as it has been said,<sup>1</sup> is 'thought out' rather than willed. Both in the microcosm of human experience and in the macrocosm beyond it, thought, and thought alone, is the determining factor. This is what is meant when it is said that the ethics of Plato are intellectualistic. Plato's mistake, as that of many later idealists, seems to us to arise from regarding a mere thought-process as not only interpretative but constitutive of reality. Whereas a whole conceived by thought—an intellectually comprehended whole—is one thing, an entirely different thing is a social whole, i.e. an ethical harmony of persons established by the wills of men.

But it is not only in the stress laid on will as well as thought that Christianity differs from Platonism. There is the distinctive difference that Christianity regards the will of the universe—the supreme and archetypal will—as love. God is love. And if for Platonism cosmic thought is comprehended only by the highest thought of man, in Christianity Divine love is appreciated only by human love as it responds to it, and as it reflects it in the social sphere. Since the love of God is a Father's love, man, being God's child, must love Him with filial devotion and other men as brothers. To the range of this brotherly love Jesus sets no limit; indeed He gives it universal scope. He bids us love all men, not excepting strangers and enemies. Plato, on the other hand, makes definite provision for the manifestation of hostility by the institution of a distinct social class of auxiliaries or soldiers whose express function it is to keep at bay outsiders regarded as barbarians. Thus there is in the *Republic* a particularism and exclusiveness which are alien to the spirit of the Christian ethic.

The Christian doctrine of God as love differs yet more markedly from Plato's Idea or Form of the Good in that, whereas the latter is an inert and inactive abstraction, the former is conceived as ever putting forth energy towards

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., i. 92.

man in order to succour and to save him. In Platonism what movement there is is directed wistfully by man towards the supreme Idea or Form of the Good, and receives the name of Eros. In the words of a Swedish theologian,<sup>1</sup> 'Love (i.e. Eros) as activity and movement belongs exclusively to man's side, for love is essentially the desire of the lower for the higher, the imperfect for the perfect. Therefore Eros is the way of man to the Divine, and can never be a way by which the Divine may descend to man.' Now it is just this descent of the Divine love to earth for the help of man which is the heart of the Gospel. The Platonic ideas, forms, or principles are silent, impassive, unmoved, and unmoving. However earnestly man in his need may try to mould his life in conformity to their pattern, to him a mere pattern they remain. In Christianity, on the other hand, God is a Saviour manifesting His love to the unlovely and the sinful, ever yearning and striving for their redemption.

Following from this difference in the conception of Ultimate Reality is the difference between the Greek and the Christian doctrines of virtue. To the Greek virtue was a purely human achievement. The Christian conception of goodness is that it is a righteousness of faith in the sense that faith is its source. Since the object of such faith is the love of God in Christ, faith of that kind has moral character, for it can be exercised only by one who repents of sin, distrusts self, and cleaves to God. Moreover, such a faith, directed towards the Divine love, produces a reaction on the subject himself, and begets an appropriate character; in the words of St. Paul (Gal. v. 6) it is a faith 'which worketh by love.' And this resulting love fulfils all righteousness. In this way God is not only the object of faith, but also its inspirer and the author of the love which flows therefrom. Divine love begets in the responsive soul its own love in ever-increasing measure. Thus, according

<sup>1</sup> Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, p. 135.

to the New Testament righteousness is the expression of love begotten in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit. From such love, so begotten, flow all the various graces of character, which, so far from being merely human attainments, are at the same time Divine gifts. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, are all ascribed by St. Paul (Gal. v. 22), to the agency of the Spirit of God in man and described as 'the fruit of the Spirit.'

It is this organic conception of the different aspects of the good life which differentiates the Christian from the Greek view of the virtues, which are distinguished primarily on psychological grounds. Wisdom, courage, and temperance are the excellences which belong to the 'parts' of human nature called respectively 'reason,' 'spirit,' and 'appetite.' Such a principle of classification is bound to lead to confusion if for no other reason than that the soul never functions in parts of itself, but always as a unity. Consequently courage and temperance are present or absent in every manifestation of character, which, again, is also an expression of wisdom or the lack of it. As for justice, it is, as we have seen, a question whether it has anything at all to do with the soul of man considered as an individual. Plato at times glimpsed the idea of the unity of the virtues, but he did not make that unity explicit. He did not show how knowledge of the Good effects the unification of the virtues. Nor does it appear how he could do so, seeing that according to him the Good itself is an ineffable mystery.<sup>1</sup> In the New Testament all the aspects of the good character are regarded as in organic relation to one vital principle, viz. love for God and its implied love for man. St. Paul, in his hymn (1 Cor. xiii.) describes the characteristic marks of love—its long-suffering, magnanimity, modesty, humility, tolerance, single-mindedness, unselfishness, patience, courage, &c. Hence the cardinal virtues do not

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, *Plato, the Man and his Work*, p. 288.

appear as such in the New Testament. It is not that the Christian is not wise, courageous, temperate and just; it is rather because the faith that works by love is the guarantee of every excellence of character. From this point of view any so-called virtue is but an aspect of the love that comprehends all excellence. For instance, temperance and courage simply describe the way in which love behaves when tempted by the seductions of pleasure and the dissuasions of fear respectively. As for justice, which seeks to give every man his due, and to strive for harmony in society, that is included in and transcended by the love which loves one's neighbour as oneself. Wisdom, too, is but love 'energized by faith' seeking and finding the supreme Good, viz. the knowledge of the love of God in Christ. Whereas Plato's ideal man is made by judicious breeding and severe educational discipline, the Christian saint is made regenerate through the grace of God.<sup>1</sup>

#### ARISTOTLE AND THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC.

Nearly 400 years separate Aristotle from Jesus. Aristotle was born in the year 384 B.C. It is not our business to attempt any survey or estimate of his contributions to Physics, Metaphysics and Logic. Our particular interest is in his Practical Philosophy, and specially in his Ethics.

Aristotle begins by asking 'What is the highest of all goods?' He replies that it is excellence of life, or 'happiness' (*Eudaimonia*). By *Eudaimonia* is meant a quality of life as a whole, as distinguished from *hēdonē*, which is the feeling of pleasure accompanying a momentary state. Such a supreme good has, he thinks, those formal conditions of the chief end which were laid down by his master Plato. That is to say, such a good is 'final,' and

<sup>1</sup> The Early Church, under the leadership of Ambrose, conceived the Christian moral ideal, not on the lines of the New Testament, but in terms of the cardinal virtues. However, Augustine related these virtues to man's supreme end—the love of God.

not something which we pursue as a means. Moreover it is self-sufficient. Also it is in accordance with reason—it is rational. Virtue or goodness, then, is, to use Aristotle's words, 'an activity of the soul in accordance with excellence, or if there are several kinds, according to the best and most consummate form of excellence.'<sup>1</sup>

When Aristotle goes on to characterize the nature of this excellent life, he stresses the fact that it cannot be a mere 'state' in which a man exists, such as, for instance, that of sleep; nor a mere emotion (*pathos*); nor a mere faculty (*dunamis*). The chief good must be some form of activity—an *energeia*, or energizing of the soul. He goes on to point out that such energy must not be manifested momentarily; it must, if a man is to be good, become a settled disposition or habit of the soul—what he calls a *hexis*. But a habit of what sort? It is a habit founded on deliberate purpose, i.e. *hexis proairetikē*.

Now, according to Aristotle, this exercise or habit of the soul, in order to be really virtuous, must satisfy certain conditions. It must be free from either excess or defect, just as perfect health is secured by avoiding both excess or defect in training or in food. Virtue, in short, is a mean between two extremes; not the absolute or arithmetical mean, but the mean relatively to ourselves, 'that which is neither too much nor too little for the particular individual.' To use Prof. Burnet's illustration—'on a given occasion there will be a temperature which is just right for my morning bath. If the bath is hotter than this, it will be too hot; if it is colder, it will be too cold. But as this just right temperature varies with the condition of my body, it cannot be ascertained simply by using a thermometer. If I am in good general health I shall, however, know by the feel of the water when the temperature is right. So if I am in good moral health I shall know, without appealing to a formal code of maxims, what is the

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, Bk. I, vi. (1098 a 16).



right degree, e.g., of indignation to show in a given case, how it should be shown, and towards whom.' In short, the mean will be determined as a man of practical wisdom or insight (*phronēsis*) would determine it. Such insight will tell a man 'what to do, to the right person, in due proportion, at the right time, with a right object, and in the right manner.' So we may say, again in Aristotle's words, 'Virtue is a habit of choosing (*hexis proairetikē*) what is a mean relatively to ourselves, as it is determined by reason, or as the wise man would determine it.'<sup>1</sup> As examples of the mean we may instance courage, which avoids the excess called foolhardiness on the one hand, and on the other, the defect called cowardice. Liberality, again, is a mean between prodigality and stinginess. Magnificence is a mean between vulgar profuseness and littleness or meanness. Gentleness is a mean between passionateness and angerlessness.

But at this point we must refer to certain conditions which, according to Aristotle, are essential to a life of virtue. 'The happy man,' says Aristotle, 'is he who manifests the highest excellence or virtue in living energy and is duly furnished with external goods.' 'Without appliances,' he says, 'it is impossible to do noble actions.' Such requisites are friends, money, and political influence. Again, perfect happiness is marred by ugliness, childlessness, lack of good birth. Fit external conditions, then, are essential to virtue, especially bodily health, sound intelligence, and membership of a civilized community. This last point is important, for it is one of the merits of the Aristotelian view of goodness that it must be social in its expression. In other words, man can be good only in a community. Aristotle, in fact, treats of ethics as a part of the larger subject of politics. The individual must learn to be good with a view to his becoming a useful member of the City-State, a good legislator. Not that,

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, Bk. II, vi. (1106 b 36).

after all, the connexion between the individual and the State is so very intimate; it is, in fact, largely external. The State exercises a discipline over the individual by means of education and in other ways. For the rest the highest flights of virtue by contemplation (*theōria*) are private and individual.

At this stage we may fitly consider Aristotle's sketch of his ideal man, whom he called 'Great-minded.' No one can be a great-minded man (*megalopsuchos*) who has not the qualifications and possessions just mentioned, and who does not move about in a community. The great-minded man values himself highly and at the same time justly. He claims honour as his special due. He will do kindnesses, but is ashamed to receive them; for he must preserve his position of superiority and not, by receiving gifts, seem to be inferior. He must not himself be under obligation to others, but must seek to place others under obligation to himself. He is pleased to hear of his own kind acts, but not of those done to himself. Towards the great he must bear himself loftily; to those of humble station he must be easy and affable. He must be above sudden excitement since in his eyes nothing can be great.

Towards the end of his ethics Aristotle treats of friendship. It is not easy to see the reason for this on his scheme. Yet though he may be inconsistent with himself in dealing with such a theme, he is not, we venture to think, out of touch with the real problem of ethics. Indeed in this discussion on friendship he seems, to us at least, to get nearer to the heart and soul of goodness than in his previous observations. He shows insight, first of all, in distinguishing false from true friendship. Those are false friends who are friends only for the sake of utility or pleasure. Real friends wish each other good. However, he holds that people who are unequal in their possessions or in their virtue cannot be friends. Perhaps the most enlightened statement he makes is in the first

chapter of Book VIII, where he observes: 'Where people are in friendship, justice is not required; on the other hand, though they be just, they need friendship in addition, and that principle which is most truly just is thought to partake of the nature of friendship.'<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle also declares that 'friendship which consists in wishing good to another for that other's sake' is 'the bond of social communities.' All these statements anticipate the doctrine that community or love is the supreme principle of ethics. Aristotle, however, did not see the implications of his remarks about friendship, or at any rate did not draw them out. He did not in particular see how friendship is related to *theōria*, which is exalted elsewhere. Indeed his discussion of friendship seems out of harmony with the rest of his treatise.

But this section on friendship is not the only example of inconsistency. There is a radical dualism in his views on the subject of knowledge, due, some critics say, to Platonic influence. We have already referred to the knowledge called *phronēsis*. It is the kind of knowledge or practical insight which is required by virtue regarded as a mean between extremes. It is the insight which tells a man what to do, to the right person, in due proportion, at the right time, with a right object, and in a right manner. It is the discernment which perceives the detailed application of a general principle. Such knowledge, of course, is not purely intellectual; it arises out of a certain sensitiveness and tact. It is at this point that Aristotle's *other* doctrine of knowledge comes into view, which is Platonistic in character. The knowledge of practical insight has its ground in a larger insight—an insight into the meaning of life as a whole, an insight which, according to Aristotle, involves the activity of the highest part of our nature, the *nous* or soul. Such comprehension is not merely the tact of the practical man of wisdom, but is

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, Bk. VIII, i. (1155 a 26).

the understanding of the philosopher. It is called *sophia*. Only those who have powers of high speculation can attain to this superior type of intellectual activity which indulges in *theōria* or contemplation, of which the reward is the knowledge of God Himself. Only those can practise *theōria* who have considerable leisure and special endowment of mind. But whoever possesses the necessary gifts and opportunities attains a virtue of a superior kind, viz. intellectual virtue. Such a one becomes self-sufficient. Cut off from his fellows he has indeed no need for other men, or for friends at all.

Thus it is that we get the dualism already referred to. There are the two kinds of virtue—ordinary or moral goodness, as against special or theoretic goodness. The former type is that to which ordinary men are called; the latter, that for which only certain select souls are eligible. Aristotle does not hesitate to regard the life of the sage or philosopher as the highest on the ground that *theōria* is the exercise of the principle that is highest in us. Intellectual life, so understood, is 'divine.' As men live it they make themselves like the immortals, whose one occupation would seem to be 'contemplation.' 'The sage, then,' he concludes, 'is the ideal and divine man, dearest to the gods, and probably the most happy.'

#### ARISTOTLE AND THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC.

We have now to attempt some estimate of the Aristotelian ethic in the light of the moral teaching of Jesus. The late Dean Rashdall compares Aristotle with Jesus, greatly to the detriment of the Greek philosopher. He says<sup>1</sup> 'Aristotle represents not the highest ethical standard of the ancient world, but in some respects one of the lowest among highly civilized moralities. His is the least modern, the least universalistic, the least humane—the most intensely aristocratic, particularistic, and intellec-

<sup>1</sup> Rashdall, *Conscience and Christ*, p. 241.

right degree, e.g., of indignation to show in a given case, how it should be shown, and towards whom.' In short, the mean will be determined as a man of practical wisdom or insight (*phronēsis*) would determine it. Such insight will tell a man 'what to do, to the right person, in due proportion, at the right time, with a right object, and in the right manner.' So we may say, again in Aristotle's words, 'Virtue is a habit of choosing (*hexis proairetikē*) what is a mean relatively to ourselves, as it is determined by reason, or as the wise man would determine it.'<sup>1</sup> As examples of the mean we may instance courage, which avoids the excess called foolhardiness on the one hand, and on the other, the defect called cowardice. Liberality, again, is a mean between prodigality and stinginess. Magnificence is a mean between vulgar profuseness and littleness or meanness. Gentleness is a mean between passionateness and angerlessness.

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<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, Bk. VIII, i. (1155 a 26).

the understanding of the philosopher. It is called *sophia*. Only those who have powers of high speculation can attain to this superior type of intellectual activity which indulges in *theōria* or contemplation, of which the reward is the knowledge of God Himself. Only those can practise *theōria* who have considerable leisure and special endowment of mind. But whoever possesses the necessary gifts and opportunities attains a virtue of a superior kind, viz. intellectual virtue. Such a one becomes self-sufficient. Cut off from his fellows he has indeed no need for other men, or for friends at all.

Thus it is that we get the dualism already referred to. There are the two kinds of virtue—ordinary or moral goodness, as against special or theoretic goodness. The former type is that to which ordinary men are called; the latter, that for which only certain select souls are eligible. Aristotle does not hesitate to regard the life of the sage or philosopher as the highest on the ground that *theōria* is the exercise of the principle that is highest in us. Intellectual life, so understood, is 'divine.' As men live it they make themselves like the immortals, whose one occupation would seem to be 'contemplation.' 'The sage, then,' he concludes, 'is the ideal and divine man, dearest to the gods, and probably the most happy.'

#### ARISTOTLE AND THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC.

We have now to attempt some estimate of the Aristotelian ethic in the light of the moral teaching of Jesus. The late Dean Rashdall compares Aristotle with Jesus, greatly to the detriment of the Greek philosopher. He says<sup>1</sup> 'Aristotle represents not the highest ethical standard of the ancient world, but in some respects one of the lowest among highly civilized moralities. His is the least modern, the least universalistic, the least humane—the most intensely aristocratic, particularistic, and intellec-

<sup>1</sup> Rashdall, *Conscience and Christ*, p. 241.



tualistic—of ancient moralities. It is the morality of the little slave-holding aristocratic class in the autonomous city-state.' This criticism is in some respects possibly a little extreme. There are, of course, in Aristotle certain valuable and permanent contributions to the theory of conduct. In particular he stresses the truth that virtue is essentially social in its expression. This he does by regarding ethics as subordinate to politics. Man's aim should be the development of his life for the sake of the State. So far as this particular matter goes, it has kinship with the Christian idea of man as a member of the Kingdom of Heaven and a servant of his fellows. Aristotle, however, did not succeed in making the connexion of ethics with politics very close. While he regards the individual as receiving a certain education from the State, he suggests that in other respects he is independent. For instance, the highest and noblest occupation of man, viz. contemplation, is a private activity, and is not shown to have any intimate bearing on the welfare of humanity. If, however, in some ways Aristotle seems to separate ethics from politics, he does realize that goodness is essentially social in its expression, as, for instance, in his treatment of the subject of friendship. He calls friendship, as we have observed, 'the bond of social communities,' and recognizes that, where this high friendship is lacking, neither external convention, nor even brute need, can make the *polis* or cement society together. 'Friendship,' he says, 'is wishing good to another for that other's sake,' and with remarkable insight he makes the statement already quoted that 'if citizens be friends, they have no need of justice.'

To this extent, then, Aristotle is not out of harmony with the New Testament which also teaches that love is the very bond of human lives, and which regards the ideal for humanity as a brotherhood. Unfortunately, he falls far short of the Christian ideal in respect of the range of the communal spirit. In Christianity there is no

exclusiveness; all men are to be brothers. No consideration of class, rank, colour, or clime must interfere with the duty of brotherhood. For Aristotle, on the other hand, friendship had limits, even narrow and parochial. It was applicable to citizens of the Greek city-state, a small society of organized people who regarded themselves as self-sufficient and independent; or, more widely, to fellow-Greeks. Outside the boundaries were foreigners, who were looked upon as barbarians and with whom contact was usually hostile. And if the city-state was exclusive to those who were without, it was exclusive also within its own borders, for it did not enfranchise its own slaves. At certain periods of Greek history a quarter of the population would be slaves. Now Aristotle regarded slaves as excluded not only from citizenship, but also from the life of virtue. 'Towards things inanimate,' he says, 'there is neither friendship nor justice, nor even towards a horse or an ox, nor a slave *qua* slave, because there is nothing in common; a slave as such is an animate tool.'<sup>1</sup> There is no friendship towards the slave *qua* slave, but only *qua* man, a qualification which, under the circumstances, would not be likely to mean much. It may, of course, be said that Christianity itself did not for some time abolish slavery; but its logic condemns it, whereas that of the Aristotelian ethic does not. As a first criticism, therefore, we find that the moral teaching of Aristotle lacks the *universalism* of the ethic of Jesus.

In the next place the Aristotelian ethic differs from that of Jesus in its disproportionate stress on deed rather than on motive. To be really good, according to Aristotle, a man needs a supply of external goods or gifts of fortune. He cannot be truly blessed in his life unless he has good birth, personal beauty, and fine children. As to this we readily admit that virtue in this world needs instruments. To be good a man must possess a mind and a body.

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, Bk. VIII, xi. (1161 b 1).

Moreover, he must have the wherewithal to serve his neighbour in love, whether by means of the cultivation of the products of Nature, the fashioning of raw material, the creations of art, or the discoveries of science. Other things being equal, it is better that a good man should have health rather than sickness, competency rather than abject penury, ability of hand or brain rather than physical or mental incapacity. We premise that other things are equal—by which we mean that, granted that the motive is noble, adequate means for its expression are desirable, and indeed, are to be preferred. However, they are not to be desired merely for their own sake; for in themselves they are non-moral. Christianity teaches that the seat of morality is in the motive, whose influence extends to its expression in act, and determines the character thereof. Favourable external conditions have only a derivative value; they have no intrinsic goodness, but merely provide virtue with a better opportunity of expression.

Now there are passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in which Aristotle seems in line with the Christian position. After asking in Bk. X, ch. 8, whether the purpose or the action is more essential to virtue, he replies that both are essential to completeness, though he adds the rather questionable statement that 'the greater and nobler the action, more things are needed.'<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless he grants that 'a man may do noble deeds, though he be not ruler of the earth and sea';<sup>2</sup> also that 'a man who has but modest means may do his duty.' In Bk. IV, ch. 1. 17, he allows that it is not necessary to be rich in order to be 'liberal,' 'for it is not the amount of what is given that makes a gift liberal, but the liberal habit or character of the doer; and this character proportions the gift to the fortune of the giver.'<sup>3</sup>

However, the general tendency of his theory is to lay

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, Bk. X, viii. (1178 b 1).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Bk. X, ix. (1179 a 4).

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, Bk. IV, i. (1120 b 7).

the emphasis on the outward expression of virtue. This is so in the picture that is drawn of the 'Magnificent' man. To such a one vast means are essential, without which his particular virtue is impossible. Evidence of the same tendency is his characteristic doctrine of the mean. We have already seen that it is a vital part of his theory that virtue is a habit of action which avoids both excess and defect, and attains the mean between two extremes. Now he says 'it is hard to find the mean; to be angry, to give money, to be expensive is what any man can do; but to do those to the right persons, in due proportion, at the right time, with a right object and in the right manner—that is not easy.'<sup>1</sup>

Scholars differ in their interpretation of this doctrine of the mean. Sir A. Grant, for instance, thinks that it makes virtue a quantity, or at least that the quantitative aspect of virtue is essential to its nature. We will take, however, the view of others like Professor J. A. Stewart, who hold that the mean is decided qualitatively; that in fact 'it is the qualitatively suitable quantity.' 'The sculptor,' says Professor Stewart, in illustration, 'shapes only the outside of the marble; but a living being is organized throughout its matter, as deep down as the microscope can reach. Similarly, a virtuous character is no mere external accomplishment, but the personality of the man.'

Now we can all admit that virtue has a quantitative aspect; that, in short, there is in its expression 'a suitable quantity.' There is, for instance, a proportion to be observed in giving, in eating, in working, in playing, &c. Perhaps, also, most people would agree that in this proportion itself there is no inherent ethical value; that the giving and the eating, the working and the playing, however measured, are in themselves nothing more than 'events.' Even to say that they are in themselves 'right' in any ethical sense of that term would be unjustified. For

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, Bk. II, ix. (1109 a 24)

indeed the particular proportion of an action derives its ethical value from the motive which has led to its determination. Considered apart from that motive the action itself, whatever its proportion, loses ethical value. Acts which outwardly seem much the same are really different acts, if they are differently motivated.

However, let us grant that, according to Aristotle, the proportion or quantity of expression is decided qualitatively. Indeed in Bk. II, ch. 6, he definitely states that 'Virtue is a habit of choosing what is a mean relatively to ourselves, as it is determined by reason, or as the wise man would determine it.'<sup>1</sup> That is to say that the right ratio is decided by an inner *phronēsis*. Nevertheless, after all allowance has been made, we still maintain that virtue for Aristotle is a matter of the less or more, in analogy with the secret of excellence in a work of art. Certainly the proportion is decided by the inner discernment of the agent; but this discernment is the result of an insight that is born partly of native genius, and partly of the experience of quantitative expression in acts, much in the same way as the artist acquires his skill as a painter in virtue of natural capacity and by long acquaintance of the effects of distances and shades of colour. Virtue, of course, has a quantitative aspect, but quantity is not of its essence. The widow in the Gospel of St. Luke who cast two mites into the treasury would be condemned on Aristotelian principles, for she observed no proportion in her giving; 'of her penury she cast in *all* the living that she had.' As an artist in moral action she was a bungler. Jesus, however, passed by the contributions of the rich, who 'had cast in of their abundance,' and took notice of the gift of the two mites only because of its evidence of an utter devotion. In Christianity it is the heart, i.e. the motive, which chiefly matters. Practical insight is also required; but it is an insight created by love, rather than the tact that comes by

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, Bk. II, vi. (1106 b 36).

mere experience. Divorced from love the right ratio of action is soulless and valueless in any ethical sense.

In the next place we observe that Aristotle fixes the seat of the highest virtue in the Intellect, whereas Jesus places it in the Will.<sup>1</sup> Let us recall the distinction which Aristotle makes between the virtue of practical life (which is that of the ordinary man) and the virtue of a superior kind, which is the exclusive attainment of those who are specially endowed with the capacity for philosophic reflection, and who have the necessary leisure for it. For this particular class there is possible an excellent form of activity which is supposed to yield a knowledge of God Himself. That activity is called *theōria*, which we have translated with more or less accuracy by the term 'Contemplation.' There is no doubt that this dualistic element in the teaching of Aristotle creates a problem for scholars, as Professor A. E. Taylor has pointed out.<sup>2</sup> 'Does any of us believe,' he asks, 'that Aristotle has really succeeded in his ethics in harmonizing the view that the good for man is the special object of the science of "Politics," and thus belongs altogether to the "active life," with the other view which he springs on us at the end of his argument that our truest good can only be found in "contemplation"?' Some critics solve this problem of the conflicting strains—the positivistic and the Platonistic—in Aristotle by saying that this doctrine of the super-excellence of the life of contemplation is thought to be the earlier thought of Aristotle, and due to the influence of Plato from which at first he had not got free. This particular matter does not concern us, except as showing that it was a characteristically Greek conception to attribute excellence or inferiority to 'parts' or aspects of human

<sup>1</sup> I here use 'will' synonymously with 'heart' as the source of motivation. Motives are determined by 'the universe of desire,' or dominant mental system.

<sup>2</sup> In a lecture on 'Aquinas as Philosopher,' at Manchester University, May 27, 1924, published in *Philosophical Essays*.

nature. We find a prominent example of it in Plato, who, in his view of man's impulses as forming a hierarchy, was led to attach virtue to the exercise of the reason as such, and to regard the life of appetite as inherently base. This prejudice Aristotle shares with Plato. For both of them intellectual activity as such is excellent, even morally so. The philosopher is the true saint. Indeed, says Prof. A. E. Taylor, 'it is from this doctrine that medieval Christianity derives its opposition between the *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* and its preference for the former, though in the medieval mind the contemplative life has come to mean . . . absorption in mystical ecstasy very foreign to the spirit of Aristotle. . . Aristotle definitely ends by placing the life of the scholar and the student on the very summit of felicity.'

Even if we adopt the more favourable view of some that Aristotle meant only that the perfect life must combine theoretical insight with practical virtue, it nevertheless remains true that, according to him, the latter type of goodness is all that is possible in some cases.

Christianity does not assign virtue to the mere exercise of any one part of our nature. The good are not good because they think, and the bad are not bad because they feel. No scorn is too great in the Gospels for those who know and do not practise; and on the other hand, the sins of the flesh, as we call them, are not singled out for special denunciation. The truth is that Christianity finds the seat both of good and evil, not in the intellect, nor in the feelings, nor in the appetites, but in the will, in the 'heart.'<sup>1</sup> 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' Beatitude is pronounced, not on the thoughtful as such, but on the poor in spirit and pure in heart. Always the test in the Gospels is the attitude of the heart, the bent of the nature, the poise of the personality as a whole. Thus the distinction made between men is not that of rich and poor, nor of

<sup>1</sup> See note on these terms on the previous page.

the clever and the ignorant, but of those of good and evil will. And since virtue is a certain quality of the will, goodness is possible for all men without exception, and possible in the same sense.

Finally, virtue for Aristotle is anthropocentric, whereas in Christianity it is theocentric. In Aristotle the basis of goodness is human. The end, *eudaimonia*, or excellent life, is conceived as excellent in itself, and is entirely 'earthly' in its reference. It is true that he has a keen sense of the social setting of duty. But in view of the egocentric tendencies of human nature there is no guarantee that the individual will be social in motive. On the contrary, the probability is that this social setting of conduct will be made to minister to the self-sentiment. All this is borne out by Aristotle's description of the great-minded man. Such a one values himself highly; his interest in other people is indirect. He delights to be honoured by them; but he always likes to feel and prove his superiority over them even by over-paying any kindness, so that he may put his neighbours under obligation. To repeat, he is pleased to hear of his own kind acts, but not of those done to himself. Whether he bears himself loftily or affably has to be decided by the social status of his associates; loftily, if they are great; easily and affably, if they are humble. Throughout this description the standpoint is purely human, and the reference to self is obvious.

Aristotle has a chapter in the *Nicom. Ethics*, viz. ch. viii, Bk. IX, devoted to the subject of Self-Love. Some commentators, e.g. Prof. J. A. Stewart, interpret this 'self' as the rational self and as therefore involving the love of others. But, as far as Aristotle is concerned, this 'therefore' seems to beg the question, especially in view of such statements as the following. 'The good man,' he says, 'ought to be self-loving, because by doing what is noble he will have advantage himself . . .'<sup>1</sup> Again, a man will

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* (1169 a 11).



give up honours and offices to his friend 'because this reflects honour and praise on himself.'<sup>1</sup> Aristotle praises the virtue of courage which, he says, is shown chiefly in facing death rather than life, and especially death in war. But in regard to such sacrifice he adds that 'Men who die for their country and friends . . . choose great glory for themselves.' The late Professor A. S. Wilkins made the following comment on Aristotelian 'Self-Sacrifice': 'After all, is there any high self-sacrifice in the courage which has been spoken of? The brave man risks a life which is eminently happy by reason of his virtue; but he does so that he may not lose just that which makes his life thus happy, and the certain loss of which by cowardice would cost him far more pain than the possible loss of all other good things. Again, in the case of friendship, whatever self-sacrifice there may be involved in Aristotle's conception of the duties it renders imperative, is due, after all, to an enlightened self-interest. For every reason chooses that which is best for itself, and a good man obeys his reason.'<sup>2</sup> It is difficult, therefore, to resist the conclusion that morality on the Aristotelian plan must ultimately find its centre in self. It is the sublimest form of prudence, the loftiest kind of Hedonism.<sup>3</sup>

In Christianity goodness is not an independent and self-sufficient quality. On the contrary, both its basis and inspiration are in religion. Whereas in Aristotle the moral life is self-inspired,<sup>4</sup> the goodness of the Christian is a fruit of the Spirit of God, begotten in the heart by the sacrificial love of God in Christ. Not only is Christian morality related to God for its inspiration, it is dependent on Him for its obligation. We are the creatures of a Divine Creator, the children also of a Divine Father.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* (1169 a 30).

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, *The Light of the World*, pp. 58, 59, 2nd edition.

<sup>3</sup> Prof. H. A. Prichard in *Philosophy* (January, 1935), describes Aristotle as a 'psychological hedonist.'

<sup>4</sup> Or, at most, driven by an immanent *telos*.

Involved in our supreme duty of love to God is the inferential duty of the love of self and of neighbour as both sons of the same Father. Moreover, all men, being sinful, are unworthy sons, and therefore dependent in a special way upon the love of God revealed as mercy. Hence it would be quite impossible for a Christian to cherish such feelings as those of Aristotle's great-minded man. Indeed, any feeling of superiority over neighbours is out of the question when all alike have the same status as children of the same Father. Also, it is impossible for any one to play the role of giver, and never of receiver, inasmuch as in the sight of God all are receivers of His bounty and His mercy, and are called upon to share in what is the property not of an individual, but of the Divine owner and Saviour. We can, therefore, understand why the basal Beatitude of Jesus was a benediction, not on wisdom, good fortune, health, beauty, or rank, but on poverty of spirit. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' said Jesus, 'for theirs is the kingdom of God.'

### CHAPTER III

## ROMAN STOICISM AND THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

WE now go on to consider a remarkable and interesting school of thought which arose subsequently to those of Plato and of Aristotle. The age was ripe for some such philosophy. Politically Athens had lost her greatness. It was a time of disillusion and despair. Amid the general scepticism men turned with eagerness to any new teacher who had any sort of help to give. Such a teacher appeared in the person of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism. He was born in Cyprus in 336 B.C. He came to Athens to learn philosophy, and about the year 300 B.C. set up a school of his own.<sup>1</sup> Briefly, the Stoics believed that the universe was composed of an all-pervasive and elemental fire, of which all things partake in different degrees. Plants, animals, and men possess amounts of this world-fire in ever-increasing proportions. Each individual holds within himself a portion of this world-fire, which was identified with the Logos or Reason. Thus each human soul is a part of, or shares in, the world-reason. Upon this foundation the Stoics sought to erect a system of conduct. The principle by which men must rule their lives was said to be that of conformity to Nature; and by 'Nature' was meant the realm of universal reason. Accordingly, life in harmony with Nature meant life that was rational. Since emotion was considered to be a disordered condition of the reason, it must be suppressed. The Stoic, therefore, tried to rid himself as far as possible of emotion, and to cultivate *apatheia* or apathy. Moreover, all things except virtue and vice were regarded as indifferent—such things, in fact, as

<sup>1</sup> The dates are conjectural.

Aristotle said were essential to the good life. At the same time there were things like health and skill which they said were to be 'preferred.' But they stressed their own independence of external goods so much that they believed that life itself might be dispensed with on occasion. Ideal conduct was represented by a pattern or model man who was called the 'Wise Man,' or the Sage. Such a one was unmoved by the vicissitudes of fortune.

Now it was an essential part of Stoic doctrine that the world-fire or world-reason dwelt in every man, and that the reason which existed in all men was one with the reason which pervaded the universe. It was on this account that Zeno and his successors maintained the doctrine of the *equality* of all men. Sometimes the Stoics conceived of the universe after the analogy of a city, and spoke of it as a world-city, or City of Zeus, in which every man was a citizen. Throughout this 'City' there prevailed one and the same law, indifferently called the law of Nature or the law of Reason. Such a law was thought of as quite distinct from the conventions and customs of different lands and ages. Indeed, this law of Nature (or *jus naturale*) came to be considered as an element common to all human codes and *fundamental* to them. On it all rules and usages of peoples which were of any value were supposed to be based. Not that this law of Nature was conceived (at least not by the Roman jurists) to have a substantive existence independently of actual codes, but rather to be something underlying existing law, and presenting a standard or ideal to which legislation should more and more conform.

In some of the early Stoics the religious note was very prominent. However inconsistent with the creed of Pantheism, or rather Panlogism, this religious devotion may seem—we shall refer to this problem of consistency later in connexion with the piety of Marcus Aurelius—nevertheless the attitude of worship was genuinely

cherished by them. It was their characteristic faith that all things in Nature redound to the glory of God, and that men especially are the very offspring of God. Of this there is impressive evidence in the hymn of Cleanthes from which we may quote the following: 'Above all gods most glorious, invoked by many a name, almighty evermore, who didst found the world and guidest all by law—O Zeus, hail! for it is right that all mortals address thee. We are thine offspring, alone of mortal things that live and walk the earth moulded in image of the All; therefore, Thee will I hymn and sing Thy might continually. . . . Thee doth all this system that rolls round the earth obey in what path soever Thou guidest it, and willingly is it governed by Thee. . . . What is uneven Thy skill doth make even; what knew not order, it setteth in order; and things that strive find all in Thee a friend. For thus hast Thou fitted all, evil with good, in one great whole, so that in all things reigns one reason everlastingly.'<sup>1</sup>

It was, however, when Stoicism passed from Greece to Rome that it became specially interesting from the point of view of Christianity. As is well known, during the first century and a half of the Empire Stoicism was powerfully advocated in the writings of three famous men—Seneca, the Statesman (b. 4 B.C., d. A.D. 65); Epictetus, the slave (b. A.D. 50, d. 130); and Marcus Aurelius, the Emperor (b. A.D. 121, d. 180).<sup>2</sup> As their writings are easily accessible, and as our space is limited, it will not be necessary to give more than a few quotations from each.

We begin with one or two characteristic sayings of Seneca: 'No human being is nobler than another, for that would mean that his spiritual essence was better constituted and capable of nobler knowledge. The world is the one

<sup>1</sup> The most likely dates for the birth and for the death of Cleanthes are said to be respectively 331 and 232 B.C. The above quotation is taken from the *E.R.E.* art. 'Cleanthes' by W. L. Davidson.

<sup>2</sup> The dates relating to Seneca and Epictetus must be regarded as only approximate.

mother of us all.' . . . 'Virtue is attainable by all, open to all; it is accessible to all, invites all: free-born, freed-men, slaves, kings and exiles. It requires no qualifications of family or of property. For virtue the man alone suffices.'<sup>1</sup>

'A good conscience is a continual feast.'

'He that makes a pass at me is as much a murderer, though I put it by, as if he had struck me to the heart. It is the intention, not the effect, that makes the wickedness.'

'We are to relieve the distressed; . . . which is but the doing of good to ourselves, for we are only several members of one great body.'

'If you imitate the gods, confer benefits even on the unthankful; for the sun arises even on the wicked, and the seas are open to pirates.'<sup>2</sup>

'We will not cease to serve the common good, to help individuals, to give aid even to enemies.'<sup>3</sup>

'Let us so give as we would wish to receive.'<sup>4</sup>

Many more extracts might be given. Happily we are not here concerned with the question of the character of Seneca as distinguished from his teaching. Suffice it to say that the estimates of his personality are very diverse, ranging from the extremely hostile view of Macaulay to judgements that are more merciful. The extracts just given show that Seneca believed that virtue was a matter of motive, that in itself it was sufficient to produce happiness; that it was open to all; that in the form of mercy it should be shown to the needy, and, in particular, to enemies.

Some of his counsels are strongly suggestive of the sayings of Jesus in respect of both *matter* and *form*. Seneca bids us be magnanimous to evil doers, after the example of the Heavenly Father, who sends rain and sun upon just and unjust; he warns us against anxiety on the

<sup>1</sup> *De Benef.* III, 18.

<sup>3</sup> *De Otio*, 28.

<sup>2</sup> *De Benef.* IV, 26.

<sup>4</sup> *De Benef.* II, 1.

principle that 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'; he points out the folly of planning for an uncertain future. 'As regards the *form* of his sayings he speaks, like the New Testament, of the house that is built on the rock; of life regarded as a pilgrimage, and as a warfare; of the athlete's crown of victory; of hypocrites like whited walls; of girding the loins of the mind. There are also traces of some of the best known of the parables of Jesus, such as the sower, the rich fool, the debtor and the talents.'<sup>1</sup>

The question has arisen whether, in order to account for all these similarities of sentiment and expression, it is necessary to suppose that Seneca had come into contact with the Apostle Paul in Rome. The problem has been dealt with both by French and English writers, notably by Lightfoot in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*. It is possible that Christian teaching filtered through different channels to Seneca. There were many Christian Jews in Rome in his day, some in the household of the Emperor. Seneca associated freely with his own slaves from whom he may have learned something about the new teaching in the Jewish synagogues. Moreover, many teachers of Stoicism came from Asia Minor, where the Jews of the Dispersion were scattering abroad the new teaching of Christianity. Some scholars think, on the contrary, that the influence was in the other direction, and that Stoic teaching affected the statement of the Gospel. Those who hold this view point out that the Apostle Paul, who was born in Tarsus, would be familiar with Stoic teaching, since Aratus, from whom he quotes in his speech on Mars' Hill, and who was also a native of Tarsus, was a Stoic. Indeed, there had been teachers of Stoicism in Tarsus for a considerable period prior to Paul's day.

The second hypothesis does not seem to me as likely as the first one. We know that Stoic teachers in Tarsus visited Rome and had access to the household of the

<sup>1</sup> Capes, *Stoicism*, p. 171.

Emperor. Such was the case in the time of the Emperor Augustus. There does not seem any reason why the migration of such teachers from Tarsus to Rome should not have gone on contemporaneously with the rise and spread of Christianity. These Stoics may well have mingled Christian and Stoic elements, or clothed Stoic sentiments in a Christian dress. Shall we, in view of the Apostle Paul's upbringing in Stoic surroundings, say that the influence was reciprocal, save that the balance was with Christianity?

But whatever be the explanation of the startling similarities between the two, we shall see that Stoic and Christian ethics have differences that are important and even fundamental.

Before we discuss these differences, however, let us glance at two other celebrated Roman Stoics—Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

Epictetus was brought up as a slave in the house of Epaphroditus, a freed-man of Nero. His master, recognizing the talent of his slave, gave Epictetus a good education, who profited by this opportunity so much that he afterwards took up the profession of a popular philosopher. The chief truth which Epictetus stressed was, as might be expected, that of true freedom such as a man enjoys by pursuing virtue, though politically he may still be a slave. 'Fortune has no power over such a one so long as he lives near to God, because the things that she can give and take away are indifferent.' Such a standpoint tended to create the pacific frame of mind, about which Epictetus so often speaks. 'If a man makes up his mind that his good and his interest lie in things that are unhindered and depend upon himself he will be free, tranquil, happy, unharmed, high-minded, reverent, giving thanks for everything to God, on no occasion blaming or accusing any one for what happens.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Discourses of Epictetus*, Book IV, Chap. 7.



The religious note is rather conspicuous. He speaks of man as a 'child of God,' a 'Fragment of God Himself,' as one 'who bears God about within him.'<sup>1</sup> 'And if our minds are so bound up with God and in such close touch with Him as being part and portion of His very being, does not God perceive their every movement as closely akin to Him?'<sup>2</sup> 'If a man could only take to heart this judgement, as he ought, that we are all, before anything else, children of God and that God is the Father of gods and men, I think that he will never harbour a mean or ignoble thought about himself.'<sup>3</sup>

Marcus Aurelius was Emperor of Rome at a troublous period of the Empire's affairs. It was during the intervals of strain and anxiety that he wrote his famous *Meditations*. His creed may be epitomized as follows: The world is a perfectly co-ordinated unity, 'one order made of all things, one God through all, one being, one law, one reason common to all things intelligent and living.' All is for the best; seeming evil is only good disguised. Life is short, and fame is fleeting. Death for man ends all, save that the seminal principles or seeds of life reproduce new forms, and are resumed into the life of the cosmos. Man's duty while he is in the world is to be self-controlled, to preserve an unruffled calm in all circumstances, and always to practise resignation. We will add one or two quotations from the *Meditations*: 'He who commits injustice is godless, for the great All-Nature has created rational beings for one another, that they may help each in need, but not that they may harm each other.'

'Just as it is with the members of an organized body, so is it with rational beings who exist separate; the same principle rules, for they also are constituted for a single co-operation. And the perception of this will more strongly strike thy mind, if thou say often to thyself, "I

<sup>1</sup> *Discourses of Epictetus*, Book II, Chap. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Book I, Chap. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, Book I, Chap. 3.

am a member (*melos*) of the system of rational beings." But if thou say, "I am a part (*meros*)," though thou change but one letter of the Greek, thou dost not yet love men from thy heart. Loving-kindness doth not yet delight thee for its own sake: thou still doest it barely as a thing of propriety, and not yet as doing good to thyself.'

'It is a merit in man to love those who wrong us. We may attain thereto if we reflect that other men are one kin with us, that they fail from ignorance and against their will, and that both of us will soon be dead.'

Those who believe that God has revealed Himself in many ways and to divers teachers and peoples have no occasion to feel jealous for Christianity as against Stoicism. Truth, wherever we find it in the world, is divine. The Early Fathers of the Church were sensible enough to realize the debt of the world to Stoicism. It is certain that justice in the Roman Empire, as far as foreign nations and peoples were concerned, would have been much less impartial, had it not been for the leaven of Stoicism among the Roman Jurists and the administrators of law. Lactantius, referring to Seneca, said 'He has said many things like ourselves concerning God.' Both Tertullian and Augustine cite Seneca with approbation, while Jerome calls him 'our Seneca.' *The Manual of Epictetus* was widely accepted among Christians as late as the fifth century, and paraphrases were written of it for Christian use.

But this eulogy of Stoicism must not blind us to certain serious defects, which we must now consider. We submit, then, that in comparison with Christian standards Stoic ethics are (1) intellectualistic and (2) egoistic.

1. Stoic ethics are *intellectualistic*. We have already seen that for Stoicism the ideal life is life according to Nature, and that, Nature being interpreted as the realm of universal Reason, the life that was natural was rational life. We saw, further, that rational life was regarded as

incompatible with feeling on the ground that emotion was supposed to taint or distort the reason and pervert judgement. Accordingly, life must be 'apathetic.' Indeed, *apatheia* or passionlessness was avowed to be the Stoic ideal. Anything, therefore, that appealed to the passions, that aroused joy or sorrow, must as far as possible be excluded. As it is through our feelings that we are at the mercy of events we must seek to stultify feeling and become indifferent to outward things. By so doing we shall neutralize the effect of the ills of life, and maintain the calm of rational existence. Thus Seneca affected to despise his banishment to the Isle of Corsica by the remark that 'banishment, which to one is so grievous, is to another no more than a bare change of place—a thing that we every day do for health or pleasure.' Epictetus defied his captors by saying: 'Put me in chains! No, no, you may put my leg in chains, but not even Zeus himself can master my will.' Marcus Aurelius observed that 'things cannot touch the soul.' He called the body 'refuse clay'; and as for breath, it was but a puff of wind, never the same.

Of course, from the *psychological* standpoint alone the Stoic position is false. The mind is a unity of thought, feeling, and will, and always functions as such. It is therefore futile to try to develop the reason *in vacuo*, so to speak. There can be no such thing as a *mere* life of thought. Nor is it possible for thought to act on feeling, even with a view to its expulsion, except by means of some other feeling. No one has stated this more clearly than Höffding: 'Everything which is really to have power over us must manifest itself as emotion or passion . . . A thought can suppress a feeling only by exciting another feeling which is in a position to set aside the first.'<sup>1</sup> This position is only made stronger if with some modern

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of Psychology*, p. 284. Prof. T. E. Jessop points out to me that much earlier than Höffding Spinoza in his *Ethica*, pt. iv, prop. vii., wrote: 'An emotion can be neither restrained nor removed except by an emotion that is contrary to it and stronger in restraining power.'

psychologists we regard the instincts as the prime movers of all activity.

Further, it seems a *moral* defect to rule out the influence of the external world. If, as some of the Stoics believed—in particular Marcus Aurelius—all the world is providentially ordered, then there must be some purpose intended in man's possession of a body, and in his career among the things of space and time.<sup>1</sup> For Christianity, neither the body, its pleasures and pains, nor the goods of life that minister to us through the body, are things indifferent. On the contrary they are valued as instruments of service to God and man. And the essence of the discipline of life consists in learning this instrumental use both of the body itself and all that concerns it—food, clothing, shelter, &c. The mind must be put to the same use, and this is the Christian rationale of aesthetic and intellectual culture. And if there is any lack of these physical and mental goods, and if for their absence no blame attaches to the individual or to society, then the Christian discipline of life takes on the form of loyal resignation to the will of God, as expressed in the hymn which enshrines the faith of Habakkuk:

Though waves and storms go o'er my head,  
 Though strength, and health, and friends be gone,  
 Though joys be withered all and dead,  
 Though every comfort be withdrawn,  
 On this my steadfast soul relies—  
 Father, Thy mercy never dies!<sup>2</sup>

The late Dean Rashdall pointed out<sup>3</sup> how destructive of altruism is this doctrine of indifference to material goods: 'If pleasure is no good for myself, it is no good for others, and I need not trouble myself about other people's pleasures; if pain is no evil, why should I seek to mitigate it? The

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, there were *two* kinds of Stoics, those who tried as far as possible to be independent of material things, and those who thought that certain goods were preferable to their absence, or to inferior types.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Rothe.

<sup>3</sup> *Conscience and Christ*, p. 247.

Stoic idea of apathy required the suppression of the altruistic as much as of the egoistic passions.'

Christianity does not maim human nature; its appeal is to the complete personality. Its Founder was compact of feeling as well as of thought and of will. From the Cross and the shadow of death He shrank. For the sufferings of others also He felt. When He saw the widow of Nain who was bereaved of her only son, He was moved with compassion. At Lazarus' grave He wept. On the hill of Calvary He was concerned for His mother and committed her to the care of a beloved disciple.

Christianity saves men *through*, not *from*, their feelings. It delivers men by the 'expulsive power of a new affection,' by a love for God in Christ and for brother man. Such love brings with it the oblivion of self. The sorrows of life are not negated, but transfigured. Whereas Stoicism prescribes for the ills of life an anaesthetic, Christianity prescribes, as it were, oxygen. Stoicism delivers from pain by killing the nerve; Christianity, by bestowing a richer and more abundant life.

2. The second defect which we find in Stoicism is that of *egoism*. One cannot read the Stoic moralists without coming to the conclusion that the real aim is to bolster up the self and to obtain for it *autarkeia*, or self-sufficiency. The ideal man of the Stoics made it his object as far as possible to be independent alike of the world and of other men, and to find his resource entirely within himself. The following saying of Seneca is typical: 'If that fruit be pleasantest which we gather from a tree of our own planting, how much greater delight shall we take in the growth and increase of good manners of our own forming.' Thus self becomes the centre. There is justification for the statement of Martensen when he says that 'the *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency: *sibi sufficiens*) of the Stoics is rightly viewed, at bottom, as nothing but a constant "sucking of one's own paw" '—the ego feeding itself from itself.

It might be thought that the case of Marcus Aurelius is an exception to this, on account of the religious aspect of his meditations. It might seem that he had lost sight of self in devotion to God, of whom he speaks so often, or at least the word for whom he uses so frequently. But on reflection it will be realized that the 'God' of Marcus Aurelius was not transcendent of himself. His creed was a Monism, according to which all things are essentially one, whatever appearance of plurality there may be. Consequently the religious language of which the *Meditations* are full implies rather the identification of himself with the Divine. Hence we read that 'the good man must not defile the divinity which is planted in his breast, nor disturb it by a crowd of images, but preserve it tranquil, following it obediently as a god.'<sup>1</sup> Compare the passage in the *Discourses of Epictetus*: 'What then is the nature of God? . . . It is intelligence, knowledge, right reason.'<sup>2</sup> Thus the Stoic could not escape himself.

According to the Stoic creed, evil, if it existed at all, existed not in man's nature, but in his surroundings, and so was physical rather than moral. It is one's environment, not oneself, that is wrong. As for human nature, that must be realized, not crucified. Clearly the Stoic ideal was self-realization, not self-suppression. And the inevitable tendency of Stoicism was to create moral pride.

This is not to say that there was no humility in the Stoic. His humility, however, did not amount to much more than a sense of awe amid the vast and mighty forces of Nature. Christianity finds the hostile element not in Nature, or the environment, so much as in human nature itself, i.e. in sin. Consequently, before there can be self-realization, there must be self-sacrifice; and the self that must be sacrificed is the self that in independence and rebellion has severed itself from God. Only those, therefore, who cease to feel self-sufficient, and become 'poor in

<sup>1</sup> *Meditations*, III, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Book II, Chap. 8.

spirit' can inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. True humility, it has been said, 'is a birth of the Gospel'; and this because it arises not so much out of a sense of creaturehood, as of sin and its consequent feeling of unworthiness. The authentic Christian note is struck by the Apostle Paul, who amid self-despair found justification and deliverance in Divine grace. He used the idea of sufficiency (*autarkeia*), but shows that it is not a self-sufficiency. In his second Epistle to the Corinthians (ch. ix. 8) he says: 'God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency (*autarkeia*) in all things, may abound to every good work.'

Before concluding this short review it seems desirable to indicate the main differences between the Stoic and the Christian conceptions of Providence. Both systems are teleological and optimistic; in both cases the universe is regarded as moving towards a goal that is good. As to the nature of this goal Stoicism is silent, but Christianity is explicit. 'Stoicism will go no farther than the bare assertion that the universe is directed to realize a value which you, as a human being, could appreciate, if you knew the whole. That is all that its statement "The universe is reasonable" can be made to yield.'<sup>1</sup> Christianity, on the other hand, teaches that the consummation of all things is the triumph of Divine love in the souls of men.

Further, to the Stoic the universe was a Monistic Whole in which man had no special status. Notwithstanding the exalted sentiments about human nature in some of the Stoic writings, man after all is but a part of this great whole like everything else. It is true that more of the world-reason dwells in him than in plants, trees, and animals; but the difference is one of degree and has no peculiar significance. Indeed, his destiny is no higher than and no different from that of any other form of life;

<sup>1</sup> Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics*, p. 49.

sooner or later everything and everyone must be re-absorbed into the life of the whole. For man, therefore, death ends all. 'Soon,' says Marcus Aurelius, 'thou wilt be ashes, or a skeleton, and either a name or not even a name, but sound and echo.' In Christianity, on the contrary, man is distinguished from the rest of creation as the special object of Divine care. He is more precious than the grass of the field, dearer than the sparrows; so dear that for his sake and his salvation God Himself stooped down into the life of men. And it is the purpose of God in Christ evermore 'to bring many sons unto glory.'

Finally, in spite of the devotional language used by the Stoic writers they do not really conceive the world-reason of which they are part in terms of personality. Behind all the evils of life—poverty, loss, pain, and death—there was no Divine heart that could feel, sympathize, and help. They cherished the view that though all was predetermined, all was for the best. Amid the changes and chances that befall it is for man to remain unperturbed and self-sufficient. Christianity, by contrast, teaches man that many of the ills of life are of his own making, and that they may and should be avoided. However, the sufferings that are unescapable are not purposeless. To the devout Christian they are not in the nature of punishment but of chastening; they are an evidence of the care and love of the Heavenly Father. In time of sorrow communion with the Divine Sympathizer who proved His sympathy by His own 'acquaintance with grief,' enables the sufferer to take up his own cross and to trust.

The Christian's love for God in Christ begets love in his heart for all God's children. Accordingly the Christian ideal for the world is that of a family, or household, of God. Stoicism bequeathed a valuable conception in its idea of world-citizenship. By this idea it certainly helped to spread amongst all men the spirit of justice and the doctrine of human equality. And there are many respects



in which such equality will always need to be safeguarded, such as equality before the law, equality in the impartial framing and administration of law, also equality, or rather equity, of opportunity. Nevertheless, merely as a social ideal equality is not enough. It conceives of men as individuals, without inner relationship or coherence among themselves. The Christian social ideal is that of fraternity, which includes all that equality stands for, and yet goes much further; which does more than secure justice between individuals; which indeed goes so far as to unite those individuals by a domestic tie; which creates something better than a world-city, even a world-household; and which derives its doctrine of human brotherhood from the Fatherhood of God.

## CHAPTER IV

### RATIONALISM AND THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

OF modern, as distinct from ancient, Rationalism we take as the typical representative Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). It is, of course, impossible to give here an exposition of the Kantian philosophy as a whole. By its description as a Rationalism is meant that it was a powerful plea for Reason as constitutive of knowledge in opposition to those empirical schools of thought which attempted to derive all knowledge merely from sensation and perception. While, however, Kant ended by setting limits to the function of reason, he was on the whole a valiant champion of the dignity of the spirit of man. Especially does this appear in his moral theory; for he sought to base morality on the firm foundation of human reason.

According to Kant man is a creature of two worlds, so to speak. On the one hand he belongs to the realm of phenomena, and in this sphere he is perforce subject to the influences of the environment, and to the likes and dislikes to which these appeal. Such influences and feelings are always tending to control him, and to dictate a life of gratification and pleasure. In so far as he submits, he is being governed against his own will, as it were. As Kant puts it, his will is 'heteronomous': it is determined by laws or causes which are not of his own choosing. However, man belongs to another world of the spirit where reason, sitting enthroned, issues sovereign commands which are absolutely binding, and do not consult inclination. These imperious behests are those of his own reason. Because they are his own, man is self-legislative, autonomous. In this realm which transcends that of likes and dislikes he is free to obey.

It was Kant's contention that morality was deducible from rational principle, in particular from the principle of non-contradiction in action. He thought to make the validity of the good life intrinsic to the reason itself. As is well known, Kant described the supreme principle of conduct as a *Categorical Imperative*. It was an 'Imperative' because the principle had to assert its authority against the domineering claims of passion and desire, and in consequence to present itself as obligatory. And this Imperative was 'Categorical' in the sense that it was binding unconditionally as being the very dictate of Reason itself. Now it is the dictate of Reason that what is right for one person is right for all. If I think that I ought to do an action, I must also believe that any one else ought to do the same action in the same circumstances. Kant, however, as we understand him, proceeded somewhat beyond this position, and maintained the formal principle that what you can universalize without contradiction is right. 'Act,' he said, 'only on that principle which thou canst at the same time will to become universal law.' Note the exact import of this. According to our view Kant is saying not merely that what is right is right for everybody under the same circumstances; he is saying the very different thing that it is the element of universality, or universal applicability, that makes an action right. Morality depends upon a certain ability to will, i.e. to will without contradiction: what is universalizable is right.

Kant, however, was led to express the Categorical Imperative in a *second* form. Because reason, which validates action, is possessed by all persons, therefore he said: 'So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only.' And this, because absolute value resides in persons as possessors of reason. Kant conceived of persons, each an end in himself, as in associa-

tion with one another. So his *third* and final version of the Categorical Imperative ran: 'Act as a member of a Kingdom of Ends.'

According, then, to the first version of the Categorical Imperative an action is right if I can conceive of its being universalized without contradiction. Promise-breaking is wrong, said Kant, because you cannot conceive the practice as a universal one without contradiction. For if all other people are supposed to break their promises, the effect of that condition of things would be that no one would place any reliance on promises, and they would, therefore, cease to be made. And if they were not made, they could not be broken. Now we cannot rationally will something to be done which would involve us in contradiction. And the contradiction would consist in willing a universal practice which would virtually make impossible the particular instance. Kant thought that the supposition of universal suicide and of universal illiterateness would in each case involve a kind of contradictoriness.

And so his implied conclusion is that, since we cannot really will that certain acts should be done by everybody, it would be irrational that we should do them ourselves. Now there is no question that the Kantian ethic is in some ways noble and inspiring. Who is not impressed by his famous statement that there is nothing in the world good without qualification except a good will? He was so far in line with Christian teaching that he raised morality far above convention and consideration of pleasure. Moreover, he taught without reservation that the goodness of the will lay in the 'maxim' or motive by which it was inspired. Again, there is great value in the idea that we must not use other people as mere means to ends of our own. True, the value is of negative rather than positive import; but, so far as it goes, it is consistent with the Christian ethic. And, of course, much more in praise of Kant might be said. But as our purpose is that of com-

paring his teaching on conduct with that of Jesus we have to note also the discrepancies.

It is not difficult to show that Kant's attempt to get a purely formal and logical criterion of right and wrong breaks down. The reason why promise-breaking cannot be considered as universalized is not that there is involved any contradiction of a logical kind perpetrated by the promise-breaker, who is supposed to will similar conduct on the part of everyone else. What makes it impossible to universalize the practice is not logic, but human nature. If promises are never kept, of course none would be made. Mere reason could never tell you this. You know it from your acquaintance with human beings and their reaction to deception. 'His argument that, if everyone stole deposits entrusted to them if they could do so safely, the result would be that there would be no more deposits, has no logical necessity about it. There is nothing unthinkable or self-contradictory in imagining people going on continually allowing themselves to be deceived and robbed over and over again. It is merely an empirical judgement based on knowledge of actual human nature that people would not in fact stand this for very long.'<sup>1</sup>

However, Kant, in spite of himself, passes from the merely formal and logical criterion of morality, and makes the test more concrete and personal. This he does especially in the second and third versions of the Categorical Imperative. But, even so, his ethic remains *unipersonal*, whereas that of Jesus is *interpersonal*. Indeed, in the first version, when he asks whether a proposed action can be considered as practised by all other people, his reference to them is indirect and unessential. He is taking other people into account only to find out what would be right for himself; he is merely trying to safeguard his own judgement against partiality, and is considering other people only for that purpose. Other people are even less

<sup>1</sup> G. C. Field, 'Kant's First Moral Principle,' *Mind*, January, 1932.

conspicuously in the picture when Kant illustrates his argument by the immorality of suicide. For the wrong of suicide, according to him, has nothing to do with the selfish disregard of the claims which others have on a man's life and service, but arises out of a kind of contradiction, viz. the contradiction of using the impulse which should secure the preservation of life in order to destroy that life. Again, the reason why it is wrong not to help others in their need is, he says, merely that we should, by such conduct, involve ourselves in inconsistency when we required and called for help for ourselves. Here, again, wrong seems to rest upon a species of contradiction, the attitude to other persons being a subordinate consideration. Thus the Kantian theory of ethics is unipersonal.

It might be thought that in the second version of the Categorical Imperative the social reference is direct and essential, inasmuch as the formula runs: 'So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of another, in any case as an end withal, never as a means only.' Here, of course, the individual is definitely regarded as being in some relation to others: we are called upon to treat other persons as 'ends.' It will, however, be noted that Kant regards the individual as an end '*in himself*.' 'Rational beings,' he says, 'are called persons, because their very nature points them out as ends in themselves. . . . Every (other) rational being regards its existence similarly.' Surely here the point of view is monadistic, and the type of morality unipersonal. Consider Kant's instances of breaches of the maxim. Suicide is wrong, he says, because the suicide, who should regard himself as an end in himself, uses himself as a means—as a thing. But, says Kant, 'a man is not a thing, that is to say, something which can be used merely as means, but must in all his actions be always considered as an end in himself.' The wrong of promise-breaking, again, is declared to consist in using another man as a means, and failing to treat him also as

an end in himself. Here the point of view actually seems to be interpersonal rather than unipersonal. But it is scarcely *positively* interpersonal. There is inculcated the sound negative principle that we must avoid using other people merely as means. But the implication is that the positive task of realizing one's rational nature as an end is each man's own affair, and does not necessarily involve others. Indeed, the single self can be as truly moral as the self in association with other selves.

Nor does the third version of the Categorical Imperative, which runs 'Act as a member of a Kingdom of Ends,' really amount to an interpersonal formula, in spite of its appearance. By 'Kingdom,' said Kant, 'I understand the union of different rational beings in a system by common laws, i.e. a Kingdom which may be called a Kingdom of Ends, since what these laws have in view is just the relation of these beings to one another as end and means.' Here, again, it seems as though Kant had advanced beyond the unipersonal view of morality, inasmuch as he conceives of a social community of individuals each of whom is reciprocally end and means to the others. We find, however, that this system of selves is such only because of having common laws. There is no suggestion that selves are united in any sense other than that they are alike subject to the same idea of duty. Kant still regards the self as a monad, able to attain ethical perfection by itself. In the words of Edward Caird, Kant implies that 'each individual, as a moral or rational being is alone with himself, and that it is only through his sensuous or outward life that he comes into contact with others.'<sup>1</sup> . . . 'In spite of his idea of a Kingdom of Ends, reverence before the abstract law is still treated as the essential and necessary form of moral sentiment.'<sup>2</sup>

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* there is at least one

<sup>1</sup> Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Kant*, Vol. II, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 266.

clear statement which definitely excludes from the nature of morality any interpersonal regard. For Kant there declares that other persons are never in any case an object for our 'respect.' The object of 'respect' or reverence is not, strictly speaking, another person, even though the situation may be a social one, but rather the 'law' which the example of another person exhibits.

When Kant likens his own view of morality to the Jewish and Christian principle of love to one's neighbour it turns out that what he means by love is 'practical love,' which, he adds, means 'liking to practise all duties' towards the neighbour. But since Kant regards 'liking' as suspect, on the ground that inclination was supposed to imply pleasure as the end of action, and to be therefore 'heteronomous,'<sup>1</sup> the love of our neighbour, from the Kantian standpoint, reduces down to the practice of social duty, not from any regard for our neighbour as such, but from reverence or respect for the moral law. In the Preface to the *Metaphysical Elements of Ethics* Kant makes it clear that he has no other conception of love than that of a merely emotional or sentimental type, which he calls 'pathological.' He definitely states that it cannot be a matter of will or volition.

Now the Christian ethic, by contrast, does not view the self as a monad, but always in essential relation to other selves and to God. The good of the self is never an exclusive good, but is always inclusive at the same time of the neighbour's good. This is epitomized in the Golden Rule: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' This means more than an equality of consideration as between one individual and another; it makes the direct attitude of individuals to one another essential. It does not say merely that what is reasonable for one man to do to another is reasonable for any other man in the same circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> By 'heteronomous' Kant meant what was other than, or external to, the self-governing (autonomous) reason.



It does not teach primarily impartiality of judgement on acts considered in abstraction from the agents; rather does it inculcate impartiality of regard between the agents themselves.

But further, the Christian ethic implies that self and neighbour are both connected with a transcendent and Divine Self who is the ground of their existence and interaction. The Categorical Imperative, by contrast, is an autonomous principle; it is a law of reason which we impose on our selves. 'All moral conceptions,' Kant tells us, 'have their seat and origin completely *a priori* in the reason.' Religion is, from this point of view, thus far not required as a basis for morality. It may here be objected that Kant's theory implied the existence of God. So it did in a way. But Kant brought God in only as a postulate to make his theory complete in the following manner. He held that the total well-being of man (the *bonum consummatum*) included happiness as well as<sup>1</sup> virtue, and that this was a demand of reason. Since, however, morality and happiness are not always conjoined in this world, and yet their perfect conjunction is demanded, Kant postulated God as a Being of sufficient power as well as goodness to guarantee their union in a life to come.

Now it is not in this fashion that Christianity conceives of the relation of God to human goodness.<sup>2</sup> In the Christian view the common love of self and neighbour is directed primarily to God Himself. The love we cherish for ourselves and our neighbours jointly is the offspring of piety. In other words, it is the outcome of reverence for God's own nature as Love. Christian morality is simply the reproduction in human lives of the Divine character. It is based on adoration, and its ultimate aim is to

<sup>1</sup> Not, however, independently of virtue. Cf. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> Christianity implies that the postulate of God is not a mere 'consequence' of morality, but its 'ground.' Love is founded in the nature of God, and derivatively in that of man.

promote in all other men adoration of the Divine name and nature.

It is for this reason that Kant's conception of the individual as an 'end in himself' is scarcely compatible with the Christian point of view. We do not mean, nor have we said, that the conception is without value. But its value is negative rather than positive. It declares a sound truth by implying that man is not a thing, and that he ought never to be used as a mere means. So far so good. But the conception does not go far enough. In the light of Christian teaching man is God's child, and the brother of his neighbour. Consequently, man is not an 'end in himself,' but a member of a Divine family of which the Father is the object of supreme devotion. Morality is thus merged in religion: it does not present an independent and self-contained ideal. Granted that in treating ourselves as 'ends' there is an aspect of dignity in such a conception; yet the dignity is after all a self-dignity, and is apt to beget an idolatry of self. But it may be replied that this danger is escaped, inasmuch as Kant teaches reverence, not so much for ourselves, as for the law of reason; reverence, that is to say, for the Categorical Imperative. And indeed Kant defined 'respect for the law' as implying the conception of a 'worth which thwarts my self-love.' Nevertheless, from our knowledge of human nature we are fairly confident that in practice it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prevent this attitude of reverence for the law changing into reverence *for ourselves* as obeying the law. For the law is, so far, a law of *our* reason. In reverencing it we are reverencing ourselves as rational. Such an attitude tends to beget moral pride. The comment of Professor A. E. Taylor is so pertinent that I cannot forbear to quote it at some length. He says: 'If the good will is no more than *my* will, or, to put it more precisely in the way in which Kant puts it, if there is no more profound and ultimate reason for my reverence for it than

that it is my own will, does not absolute reverence for the good will and its law of duty degenerate into self-worship? . . . The commands of morality do not originate in a reason which is "my" nature, . . . they come from a supreme and absolute reason into likeness with which I have to grow, but which remains always beyond me. What "my" reason does, and does always only imperfectly, is to *recognize*, not to create, the obligations it is my duty to fulfil. It is just because the reason which is the source of the moral law is not originally mine, nor that of any man or all men, that I can reverence it without reservations.' <sup>1</sup>

Another difference between the Kantian and the Christian ethic is that the former conceives of morality in terms of *law*, the latter regards it rather as the outcome of personal devotion, not to a Law-Giver, but to a Father and Saviour who is Love, both in His own nature, and in His purpose. The reason why the note of obedience is not stressed in the New Testament is not that obedience is not important, but rather because a higher note is heard—that of devotion to God in Christ, which guarantees obedience. The standpoint of law is abstract and impersonal; or, if it refers to a person, it is to a person conceived as a Law-Giver. It is not in that guise that God is revealed in the New Testament, but rather in that of the Divine Lover and Redeemer of men. There is a curious dualism in the Kantian ethic from which the Christian ethic seems to us to be free. The end for self is not the same as that which a man must seek for his neighbour. The individual is to treat himself as his own end, but for other people he can seek only happiness—which, however, he must never pursue for himself. Perfection, duty—this is the end for ourselves; happiness is what we must try to promote in our neighbours. Surely there must be one and the same end for self and for neighbour. Notwithstanding Kant's objection it is a fact that we can assist each other's

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*, Vol. I, p. 152.

perfection or virtue. Daily experience shows how man can strengthen or weaken the morality of his neighbour. According to the New Testament, what we have primarily to develop in ourselves and in others is devotion to God, the attitude of filiality to Him who is Father and Redeemer.

Kant regarded it as a demand of reason that happiness should accompany virtue. The relation of happiness to virtue is, however, a question so important that we must defer its consideration to a subsequent chapter.

So far I have said little or nothing about what is called the Kantian 'rigourism.' By this term allusion is made to Kant's characteristic view that the only correct motive in morality is respect or reverence for the moral law as expressed in the Categorical Imperative. Indeed the Kantian ethic is sometimes epitomized as the theory of duty for duty's sake. Kant's reason for insisting that duty must be done only from the motive of respect for duty arose out of his view (mistaken, as most people now believe) that a motive into which feeling of any other kind than that of respect entered must necessarily be suspect. Feeling, other than the emotion aroused by love for the moral law, was, he thought, tainted with the desire for pleasure in some form; and action for the sake of pleasure was wrong. To surrender to the appeal of pleasure was to cease to govern ourselves by the self-imposed ideal of duty; it was to exchange the nobility of our autonomous rule for ignoble determination by a force outside us, which he therefore described as 'heteronomous.'

Christianity has an ally in Kant in so far as he teaches the doctrine of the loftiness and dignity of the moral life.<sup>1</sup> From this point of view his ethic must remain always a tonic to all who, in trying to live the good life, or to do

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the passage at the end of the *Critique of Practical Reason*: 'Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within. . . .'

what is right, are liable to be influenced by a mixture of motives, or by any considerations lower than the highest. In times of moral laxity there is a value in the bracing effect of such a view as that of Kant.

Nevertheless, the idea that feeling, when not directed towards duty, inevitably expresses itself in a desire for pleasure is not generally accepted to-day. Bishop Butler long ago showed that our desires are directed, not to pleasure as such, but to their appropriate objects. The object of hunger is not pleasure but food. And so far are our desires from necessarily menacing the ethical integrity of motive that it is out of our instinctive impulses, as so much 'raw material,' so to speak, that morality is developed. The love of our neighbour is not independent of that native sociality with which every soul is endowed. Any and every form of affection, so far from impairing the purity of ethical love, may go far to sustain and enrich it. Also the possibility of devotion to God in Christ, and of response to the love that proved itself in a cross, is laid deep in the heart of man. So much so that the religious life is the natural heritage of every man born into the world. Indeed, the love of God and our neighbour is, by the help of the Holy Spirit, the ideal development, albeit through the denial of self and the accompanying discipline, of that native affection latent in the soul of man which ever yearns to find its Divine fulfilment.

## CHAPTER V

### HEDONISM AND THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

THE view that the good is pleasure dates from the Cyrenaics and the Epicureans of Greek philosophy. It has persisted through the centuries down to the present day. For the purpose of comparison with the Christian ethic we will begin our examination of Hedonism with a brief study of modern defenders of the pleasure philosophy—especially its English champions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) declared: 'Pleasure is in itself a good; nay, even setting aside immunity from pain, the only good; pain is in itself an evil; and indeed, without exception, the only evil.'<sup>1</sup> 'If motives are good or bad, it is only on account of their effects.' He makes it clear in the *Deontology* that we are to seek the happiness of others only so far as it conduces to our own. Thus his Hedonism is of the egoistic type. Should the happiness of the individual and that of society threaten to come into conflict Bentham described the factors which would bring about their coincidence, and which he called 'sanctions' of morality. These consisted of the different kinds of pain, natural, political, social, religious, internal (mental), which attend, or are made to attend, any form of private pleasure which menaces social happiness. It was also contended by Bentham that pleasures differ only in respect of quantity. 'Push-pin is as good as poetry.' Further, pleasures are commensurable. In making up a sum of pleasures he allowed that regard must be had to what were called the dimensions of pleasures. Just as we calculate the size of a room by its length, breadth and height, so Bentham

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chap. X, par. 2.

maintained that we estimate pleasures according to seven dimensions: their intensity, duration, nearness, certainty, purity (i.e. freedom from accompanying pain), fruitfulness (i.e. tendency to be followed by other pleasures) and extent. By 'extent' is meant the number of people affected by the pleasure; a more far-reaching happiness, other things being equal, is to be preferred to one of narrower range.

It may be noted at this point that the question of 'extent' is a crucial one for egoistic Hedonism. If 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' (the ideal championed by Bentham) can be obtained only by the sacrifice of one's own, what is to be done? If our own must be sacrificed, that precludes egoism; if our own must be preserved, that would militate against the ideal of greatest happiness—at least as the real ethical end.

J. S. Mill (1806-1873) attributed to Bentham the democratic principle 'everybody to count' for one and nobody for more than one' in the distribution of pleasures. But it is easy to see that, if account be taken only of *quantity* of pleasure, much more pleasure on the whole might be obtained by gratifying the desires of some persons rather than those of others, since individuals differ vastly in their capacity for pleasure.

Mill, however, revolted both from the egoism of Bentham's theory as well as from the view that pleasures differ only in quantity. He therefore stressed, not so much the individual's own claim to happiness as the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In introducing this more altruistic feature, as well as in recognizing that some pleasures are higher or better than others, Mill brought the theory into closer touch with public opinion, although at some cost to its logical consistency. The fallacies of his notorious 'proof' of this universalistic Hedonism (or Utilitarianism, as he called it) are the play of the text-books in ethics. However, he believed that the 'ethics of utility'

enshrined the spirit of the 'Golden Rule of Jesus of Nazareth.' A more carefully reasoned defence of Universalistic Hedonism was made by Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900). Having adopted the view that there is nothing which is intrinsically desirable except pleasure, he argued that from the point of view of reason the equal happiness of any person is to be equally desired with my own. Sidgwick did not deny that it is reasonable for the individual to seek his own happiness; but he added that it was also reasonable for the individual to prefer the general happiness to his own, on the ground that the happiness of a whole, or a majority thereof, is greater than that of a part. This position, of course, tends to dualism. In the event of the happiness of the whole, or of the majority, not coinciding with the happiness of the individual, there is a conflict of reasonable ends. A further difficulty is created by Sidgwick's assumption that all pleasures and pains are susceptible of quantitative comparison,<sup>1</sup> combined, as it is, with the view that the production of the greatest amount of happiness on the whole should be the ethical aim.

An Evolutionary type of Hedonism was advocated by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Spencer thought that the principles of evolution would supply a more scientific guide to the pursuit of happiness than the empirical methods of the Utilitarians. Other thinkers besides Spencer have tried to establish an evolutionary basis for Ethics. Generally speaking their attempts have been vitiated by what Dr. G. E. Moore has described as the 'naturalistic fallacy.' These thinkers have too readily assumed that what is more evolved is *therefore* ethically better. Dr. Moore has cautioned us against the view 'that we ought to move in the direction of evolution simply *because* it is the direction of evolution . . .'<sup>2</sup> And he adds, 'If evolution is to give

<sup>1</sup> *Methods of Ethics*, 6th edition, p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> *Principia Ethica*, p. 56.



us any guidance as to how we ought to act in the future, it does involve a long and painful investigation of the exact points in which the superiority of the more evolved consists.'<sup>1</sup> That much depends upon the way in which the evolutionary process is interpreted was shown by the late Prof. T. H. Huxley in his famous Romanes Lecture on *Evolution and Ethics*.

Huxley, understanding evolution in its natural operation to mean nothing more than a ruthless and selfish struggle on the part of every form of life for survival, contended that it was man's duty to reverse this process of Nature. Man must, in his dealings with his fellows, substitute for this ethic of the jungle a humane and unselfish type of conduct. On the other hand, Herbert Spencer thought, as we have said, that in the laws of evolution he had found a scientific basis for Hedonism. He assumed that pleasures were the correlatives of actions conducive to the welfare of the organism, and that pains were indicative of what was injurious to it. We are not here concerned to discuss the truth of this assumption. Nor do we propose to inquire how far the doctrine of evolution as interpreted by him was a help to the Hedonistic theory, though he himself confessed that it had not furnished guidance to the extent he had hoped.<sup>2</sup> It is in virtue of his adoption of the Hedonistic end that he comes into line with all other Hedonists with whom on this account he can be classified.

We have now to inquire how far, if at all, Hedonistic ethics find any support in Christianity. So much the worse if they do! it may be said. For indeed there are grave objections to Hedonism of a purely theoretical character which we may, in the interests of truth itself, take note of. First of all, then, Hedonism finds no support in *psychology*. Many Hedonists aver that our desires are perforce directed towards pleasure. But psychologists have shown over and

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the Preface to Vol. II of the *Principles of Ethics*.

over again that desires are directed, not to pleasure, but rather to objects, which may or may not bring pleasure. In our hunger, for instance, we primarily desire not pleasure, but food. Indeed, there is no such thing as 'pleasure' in itself; it is an abstract idea. What exist are so-called 'pleasures,' which, strictly speaking, are objects or activities that bring pleasure. To try to separate the pleasure from the experience (except in idea) is as futile as the endeavour to detach the bloom from the peach.

Since we cannot isolate pleasure from the experience which brings it, every pleasure will necessarily be qualified by the experience with which it is connected. 'Any mental event which has hedonic quality will always have other qualities as well, and its specific hedonic quality will often be causally determined by its specific non-hedonic quality.'<sup>1</sup> Experiences which are often described as the same are never precisely similar, and their pleasure-quality differs accordingly. The satisfaction of one's hunger by food is pleasurable; but the accompanying pleasure is never precisely the same at each experience of satisfaction, and it varies according to the nature of the food. A diet of locusts and wild honey will have a hedonic quality which is different from that of a meal of bread and cheese. It follows, then, that since pleasure is not a detachable and determinable entity, comparison of pleasures is, strictly speaking, impossible, even in the case of pleasures associated with the same type of experience. A music lover will say that Beethoven, Wagner, Tschaikowsky, and Elgar are all enjoyable. But the pleasures derived from the music of these different masters are in the last analysis really unlike and incomparable. Comparisons, of course, are made, but they are of a general kind. They are subject so much to the influence of mood and temperament as to be themselves liable to variation.

Hedonists sometimes seek to evade these difficulties by

<sup>1</sup> C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 230.

recommending what are called the 'loftier' types of pleasure. But if 'higher' are to be preferred to 'lower' pleasures, as J. S. Mill advised, that is tantamount to saying that there are reasons for preferring an experience other than its pleasurable nature. To admit this is, of course, to give up the Hedonistic theory.

Other Hedonists have sought to maintain the desperate position that pleasures are quantitatively measurable, and that the so-called 'higher' pleasures may be in this way expressed in terms of the so-called 'lower.' We have just spoken of the difficulties besetting a qualitative comparison. The attempt to conceive of pleasure as a quantity seems even more hopeless. In the effort to attain a consistent theory, however, the doctrine of the commensurability of pleasures has been seriously maintained. For if the aim be to produce the greatest quality of happiness *as a sum*, the troublesome difficulty is avoided of passing from the reasonableness of seeking pleasure for oneself to the reasonableness of seeking pleasure for others, and *vice versa*.

But if these difficulties are escaped, others are created. Happiness, now, 'is considered in entire abstraction from the nature of the being for whom it is good, and the question of more or less is all that remains.'<sup>1</sup> Individuals, on this view, are of no more significance than to supply units of happiness to the happiness sum, or to subtract amounts therefrom. And there would be all sorts of ways in which the quantum of happiness might be distributed. Sidgwick himself recognized that there might be special grounds for believing that more good may be obtained by seeking the good of one person rather than that of another. Some people may exist to be only the means to the happiness of others. It is easy to see that on occasion this might in practice be compatible with much misery. As Green said:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Albee, *History of English Utilitarianism*, p. 405.

<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Book III, Chap. III, par. 214.

'Under the (utilitarian) formula a superior race or order could plead strong justification, not indeed for causing useless pain to the inferior, but for systematically postponing the inferior's claims to happiness to its own.'

So much for theoretical objections to Hedonism. How far does the New Testament, and especially the teaching of Jesus, authorize the quest for pleasure?

Professor Kirk points out<sup>1</sup> that there are apparently two strains in the teaching of Jesus, one of which seems to teach self-centredness, and the other, God-centredness and self-forgetfulness. Of the passages which appear to sanction the quest for one's own well-being there are the following: 'Sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.'<sup>2</sup> 'Love ye your enemies and do good . . . and your reward shall be great.'<sup>3</sup> 'There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters and mother, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.'<sup>4</sup>

On the other side there are passages which just as clearly demand devotion and service to which no promise of reward is attached, and of which the following is typical: 'If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.'<sup>5</sup>

What makes the teaching of these passages appear so conflicting is that use of paradox which is characteristic of the speech of Jesus. We suggest, and shall now try to show, that there is no real contradiction in the teaching, and certainly no support for a Hedonistic ethic.

<sup>1</sup> *The Vision of God*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xviii. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Luke vi. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Mark x. 29, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xiv. 26-7.

No doubt Jesus did on occasion make an appeal to self-interest. He declared that 'it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.'<sup>1</sup> As to this we may point out that to Jesus any man's self was potentially of great value. Man is God's child, although for the time being he may be a prodigal. Further, Jesus realized that no price is worth the barter of one's heritage. Nothing that earth can give is worth the sacrifice of one's soul. Jesus used this prudential argument to arrest men's thoughts; its purpose was cautionary; He wished to make the foolish halt and consider. His meaning is that for those who are influenced by the prospect of a bargain religion is the highest prudence. When, however, He makes a positive appeal for discipleship—He bases it not on the prospect of pleasure, but on His own claim to loyalty. 'Follow Me,' He cries; 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven.' Nothing must stand in the way of the supreme object of devotion—not the quest for food, nor for drink, nor for clothing. The alternative is the service of Mammon; and he who serves God cannot serve Mammon. Indeed we must surrender every competing interest, even though the loss means pain. So little was Jesus a hedonist of the conventional type that He bade all who would be His followers forsake, if necessary, houses and lands and homes. And in the nature of the case, He said, devotion to Him would involve denial of the self with all the suffering that such a suppression might involve.

The question now arises whether there is, or can be, any relation between devotion to God and pleasure. It was an old Hebrew view that a connexion did exist, as we see from the Old Testament. Piety and prosperity were supposed to go together. The service of Jehovah was expected to vindicate itself in plentiful offspring, much cattle, extensive lands, multitudes of slaves and servants.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 30.

The tradition was so strong that suffering was supposed to be a mark of the Divine displeasure. A similar prudentialism characterized a great part of pre-Christian Jewish ethics.

The supposition of an inherent connexion between vice and suffering was expressly condemned by Jesus. Nor did He teach that there was any essential relation between virtue and pleasure. Indeed the lesson of the so-called Parables of Reward is that the wages of virtue are the 'wages of going-on.' Those who have been faithful under trust are given larger spheres of service. Indeed, in the light of the whole context of the teaching of the Gospels the idea of reward is out of place, suggesting as it does the conception of merit. There are other parables which teach that we do not really earn anything from God, but are recipients of His grace.<sup>1</sup>

If then we cannot trace any inherent connexion between virtue and pleasures due directly or indirectly to sensory experience, we shall not discover any essential relation between the experience of the vision of God and such pleasures. It is not meant, of course, that a spiritual experience cannot be associated with pleasures of the body and of the mind; only that it cannot be *directly* augmented by them.<sup>2</sup> A spiritual experience cannot be augmented by anything outside itself; its increase must come by spiritual means.

Pleasure is to some extent independent of piety, as piety is of it. Providing one has a good digestion, the pleasure of satisfying hunger is in itself much the same both in sinner and saint. Music, poetry, and painting yield their enjoyments irrespective of the moral or religious character of their devotees, though the experiences may lack a rich-

<sup>1</sup> Especially the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, which implies that we do not really *earn* anything at God's hands.

<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that pleasures due directly or indirectly to sensory experiences may not act as a *vehicle* for an ecstasy that is truly divine.

ness that in a spiritual context they might possess. And yet, after all, the pleasures of life do not flourish in complete independence of piety. Other things being equal, a good man, who by reason of his goodness avoids excesses, will, by preserving his physical and mental health, make himself capable of a more balanced and sustained enjoyment even of those very pleasures. This enjoyment will be still further enhanced by his religious outlook, by his faith that it is God 'who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.' What is more, this pious outlook on life, expressing itself in love to others, if it were universalized, would very considerably augment human enjoyment in many ways. For in such a society there would be no greed or vice. A society without crime or vice would, it is clear, rid itself gradually of many of the causes of physical and mental suffering. Not only would its physique become healthier, but its mind would be delivered from hate and fear. Universal love would bring in the reign of peace and joy. In this sense godliness has the promise of the life that now is.

So far, however, the relation between piety and pleasure, while real, is nevertheless *indirect*.

When we carefully consider the teaching of Jesus we are obliged to conclude that *directly* and *essentially* connected with the attitude of filial devotion to God there is an experience, not exactly of pleasure in the sensuous meaning of the term, but of satisfaction. Jesus Himself describes this satisfaction by the word 'blessedness.' Indeed, according to Jesus' own declaration the possession of the Kingdom of God brings beatitude.

I think that we shall best enter into the meaning of beatitude by the use of analogy. Biologically, pleasure attends the unimpeded exercise of a natural function. Normally, eating, drinking, walking, &c., are pleasurable. Similarly, the exercise of man's soul in worship is a natural activity, and therefore brings its own satisfaction, which,

of course, is of a spiritual kind. Accordingly, a soul which is ideally adjusted to that spiritual realm which is its true environment will feel—not sensuous pleasure, but that harmony which comes from being in tune with the Infinite.

Jesus was at one with His Father. ‘I do always those things that please Him,’ He said.<sup>1</sup> Such transcendent unity must have meant something of which the happiness of human love is but a faint shadow. Indeed, Jesus speaks of His own ‘joy,’ and desires that His followers might have His joy fulfilled in themselves.<sup>2</sup> No wonder, then, that to the man who is perfectly adjusted to the Divine will—no wonder that to such a one Jesus promises peace, rest, beatitude. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.’ Spinoza glimpsed this truth when he said that ‘beatitude’ is to be regarded not as the reward of virtue, but virtue itself. In other words, virtue, which he identified with ‘the intellectual love of God,’ involves the experience of beatitude. Christian joy, therefore, has no essential reference to the pleasures due directly or indirectly to sensory experience, though, as we have seen, it is not inconsistent with them and actually tends to enhance them; but it is a joy of the soul which essentially accompanies the soul’s complete and final adjustment to ultimate reality. Peace, joy, rest—these states are not extrinsic to piety—they are essentially involved in it.

One point still remains. Hedonists, as we saw, are logically driven to consider pleasure as the ideal in abstraction from this or that man. ‘A purely teleological utilitarianism would have to hold that an action of mine would be right provided it increased the total happiness *in* the community as much as any other action open to me at the time would do, and that the way in which I distributed this extra dose of happiness among the

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 13; xv. 11.



members of the community was a matter of complete indifference.’<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, Hedonists are further driven to regard pleasure as measurable in quantities, and different types of pleasure as commensurable. Recognizing that persons differ very much both in their capacity for enjoying and producing pleasure, members of this school of thought would regard it as right and reasonable to select for attention that portion of the community in which the greatest sum of pleasure would be realizable. Thus it may be the vocation of some individuals to be mere means to the pleasure of others; others may even be deemed ciphers, and therefore negligible, whether as creators or receivers of pleasure—all this without any inconsistency in the Hedonistic theory.

How much opposed to such a view is the teaching of Christianity may be gathered from the Parable of the Lost Sheep.<sup>2</sup> ‘How think ye?’ said Christ, ‘if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.’

Hedonism regards individuals as of no more importance than to supply units of pleasure to the pleasure-sum, or to subtract amounts therefrom. Christianity teaches that the individual is of unique and incomparable value, a child of the Heavenly Father.

There have been writers on Hedonism who have declared that the Golden Rule of the Gospels is practically identical with utilitarian morality. Such a view, however, can be held only by those who detach the rule from its context in the Scriptures, and thereby distort its meaning. The Christian love of our neighbour is not, of course, indifferent

<sup>1</sup> C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 12, 13.

to his happiness. As far as it can, it tries to promote it. But it feeds him, clothes him, comforts him, gives him drink, only that it may go further and share with him the source of real and eternal joy, viz. the realization of a common Divine heritage as the sons of God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a suggestive exposition of the teaching of Jesus on Joy, cf. Boyd Scott, *Christ, the Wisdom of Man*, pp. 177-88.

## CHAPTER VI

### SELF-REALIZATION AND THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

THE doctrine of Self-Realization as man's ethical end is based on the metaphysical theory known as Absolute Idealism, of which Hegel was the chief exponent. The Hegelian point of view, as it affects the problem of morality, was expressed with more or less strictness by at least two famous English philosophers—F. H. Bradley and T. H. Green. I select Green's important work, the *Prolegomena to Ethics*, as giving a fairly clear statement of the moral end conceived as self-realization.

In accordance with the Hegelian position Green starts from the principle that Reason is the nature of Reality. This Reason, which is the nature of the world, exists in man, and is constitutive, not only of the world which he knows, but also of his knowledge of that world. It is the source alike of the relations between phenomena, and of our apprehension of them. Our consciousness of a world of experience is not the product of that world of which it is the consciousness, but is rather the reproduction in us of that Eternal Consciousness for which the world eternally exists. Reason, which is the source alike of Nature and of our knowledge of Nature, is the source also of our moral nature. This same reason is the source, again, of the motives which, however, man also helps to make; for a motive is 'the presentation of a want by a self-conscious subject to himself, and with it the idea of a self-satisfaction to be attained in the filling of the want.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus a motive is always the desire for personal good in some form or other; in all desires the one self-conscious

<sup>1</sup> *Proleg. to Ethics*, Book II, Chap. I, p. 94; edition 1883.

soul or subject seeks ever and always its own good. 'Self-satisfaction,' Green maintains, 'is the form of every object willed; but the filling of that form, the character of that in which self-satisfaction is sought, ranging from sensual pleasure to the fulfilment of a vocation conceived as given by God, makes the object what it really is. It is on the specific difference of the objects willed under the general form of self-satisfaction that the quality of the will must depend. It is here, therefore, that we must seek for the basis of distinction between goodness and badness of will.'<sup>1</sup>

Apparently the difference between good and evil is not absolute, for reason manifests itself in both. However, in goodness there is what Green calls a 'better' exercise of the reason. By a 'better' exercise of the reason is meant such an exercise as is informed by a *true* judgement in regard to human good.

Green goes on to characterize this good as *social*. True 'the ultimate standard of worth is an ideal of personal worth';<sup>2</sup> but we can realize ourselves as persons only in a society of persons. This interest in others is not merely the recognition of dependence upon them for the gratification of the desires of the self, but is an interest 'in the good of those other persons which cannot be satisfied without the consciousness that those other persons are satisfied.' This desire for a sharable good is the work of reason, which in the course of human history has expressed itself in certain social institutions such as the Family, the Nation, and the State; institutions, indeed, where good is more or less sharable. Thus Green maintains that true good is the good, not of any one exclusively, but of any one only as it is also the good of each and all. In a word, true good must be *common good*. As an example of this he instances the Family.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Book III, Chap. I, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Book III, Chap. II, p. 193.

In his exposition of good as 'common,' Green is clear that good cannot be identified with pleasure; for it is only too evident that pleasure is a purely individual experience. Nor can good consist of objects which admit of being competed for, and of which one person may possess more and another less. Therefore the conclusion is that, if good is to be 'common,' it must be *non-material*, i.e. *spiritual*. In his effort to be explicit as to the further characteristics of this common good, Green makes statements which are somewhat conflicting. Sometimes he speaks of it as 'the reciprocal claim of all upon all to be helped in the effort after a perfect life.' Its purpose is 'the full realization of the capacities of the human soul.' At other times he states that the ideal life for men is 'a will of all which is the will of each'; 'a spiritual activity in which all may partake.' This latter description, which seems to us the more illuminating, is confirmed by the further statement that the will to seek a common good is 'a state of mind or character of which the attainment, or approach to attainment, by each is itself a contribution to its attainment by everyone else.' Using now the concept of self-realization which Green favoured we have, in accordance with his theory, to regard the realization of self as possible only in the effort to attain at the same time the realization of other selves.

How is all this related to Christianity and its ethic? In that Idealism regards man as a manifestation of eternal Spirit it has a certain kinship with the Christian view that man is a child of God. Both Idealism and Christianity consider man in intimate relation to Reality as a whole. Differences emerge, however, when it is seen that Idealism interprets the 'whole' as supra-personal Reason, whereas Christianity teaches that God is a personal Spirit—a Father.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'The theistic and the pantheistic ideas which struggled together in his (Green's) mind never quite fought the battle out to a finish.'—W. D. Lamont, *Introduction to Green's Moral Philosophy*, p. 190.

The difficulty which Absolute Idealism has to face is that of explaining how man can be at once a manifestation of eternal consciousness or reason, and yet have any reality sufficiently independent as to make him a morally responsible being. According to Green, when man reasons or thinks, it is the eternal consciousness reasoning or thinking in him. But if men are merely fragmentary expressions of an eternal consciousness, they cannot be also amenable to the ethical life.

No doubt the Christian point of view also has its difficulties. How, if man is a free agent, can God and man exist in the same Universe? Of this problem Christianity attempts no philosophical solution; it simply declares that God is the Creator and Father of men, that His nature is Love, and that man's duty as the child of God is to imitate and reproduce the character of his Divine parent. However, in Christianity, as distinct from Idealism, the relation between God and man is that of *persons*; in Absolute Idealism the relation is that of the One to the many, and is to be *logically* conceived. By his criterion of coherence the Absolute Idealist thinks to unify all differences, even the apparently separate existence of individual selves. In thus reducing the variety of the world to unity he achieves a whole which, being purely logical, is not patient of the existence of anything outside it such as persons, who, besides existing for the whole, are usually considered also to exist for themselves. Christianity implies that persons exist, not only in and for God, but also for themselves. And persons, having this kind of existence for self, can effect a union with one another, which is a union of wills—a real and living unity which we call love.

Green's doctrine of Self-Realization presents also certain difficulties of a *psychological* nature. As we have already observed, Green declares that in all desires the one self-conscious soul or subject seeks ever and always its

own good. Self-satisfaction, he said, is the form of every object willed. The self, in desiring, seeks some further state of itself which Green describes as self-satisfaction. We will not go into the difficulty raised by Sidgwick<sup>1</sup> as to whether on Green's presuppositions the self can really desire an abiding and a future good. We will merely point out that Green's psychology, if true, would make the Christian ethic impracticable.<sup>2</sup> For, strictly speaking, this doctrine of self-realization permits of only an egoistic ethic. In seeking the good of our neighbours we seek, according to Green's formula, ultimately *our own* good. But, as Rashdall said,<sup>3</sup> 'if I cared for my neighbour's welfare merely as a means to my own edification, I should not be unselfish.' So-called altruistic action loses its meaning if its motive is simply the attainment by the agent of some state of his own consciousness.

Now there does not appear to be any 'self' *instinct* in man, strictly speaking. There is, of course, an instinct of self-preservation; but such an instinct is spontaneous and, so to speak, automatic; it has no reference to self as an ideal construction. Of course, a self *sentiment* may develop, and as a matter of fact is only too ready to do so; so much so that egoism as an actual practice is only too common. But on *the instinctive level as such* we seem to be as really social as self-regarding. In the other-regarding attitude there is a reference not only to other men, but to the Divine. We have, to use Otto's language, a feeling for the 'numinous.' That is to say, man is instinctively social and religious. It is this triangular interest, so to speak, which according to Christianity constitutes the situation of man. The individual 'naturally' relates himself to the Divine and to his fellows.

To come to closer grips with our subject, we must now

<sup>1</sup> *Ethics of Green, Spencer and Martineau*, pp. 35, 51, 53.

<sup>2</sup> And surely also his own ethic of Common Good. Cf. Lamont, *Introduction to Green's Moral Philosophy*, pp. 214-15.

<sup>3</sup> *Theory of Good and Evil*, Vol. I, p. 56.

inquire how far Green's ethic of Self-Realization accords with the teaching of Jesus. Superficially at any rate there is some resemblance. As Dr. Boyd Scott remarks:<sup>1</sup> 'With Jesus as with Green the aim of life lies somewhere in the fulfilment of personality, in the true realization of man's self.' And certainly Jesus did often speak about a man's 'finding' his life, 'winning his soul,' and 'being perfect.' But, as Dr. Scott goes on to say, 'we cannot readily find in the teaching of Jesus the flavour of attention to self which the term self-realization carries with it.' On the contrary, Jesus clearly placed this realization of self in closest possible relation to the worship of God and the disinterested service of other men. The logic of this is, of course, that a self which is isolated or exclusive in its interests, which detaches itself from God and fellow-man, cannot possibly realize itself; nay, it will wither and perish. It can realize itself only in relation. It must above all find its adjustment with God, its Maker, its Father, and Redeemer, and then with other children of God. And it cannot do this easily; for to do it the self must '*die*'—it must die to its isolation, its exclusiveness, its self-dependence and self-sufficiency. It must become humble before God. In its creaturehood and in its sinfulness it must become 'poor in spirit.' The self-realization of the Christian is essentially based on self-sacrifice—which is the sacrifice, not merely of this pleasure or that, this indulgence or that, but of the self as an object of independent and self-sufficient worth. This experience in the life of the Christian is a crucial one; he dies to himself. There seems no such cruciality<sup>2</sup> in Green's doctrine of self-realization. Apparently no tears accompany the effort to be one's true self. The Christian, by contrast, goes through spiritual death, burial, and resurrection.

It was, however, a sound truth which Green taught

<sup>1</sup> *Christ, the Wisdom of Man*, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps because, owing to his saintly character, he never felt this aspect keenly.



when he declared that the self can be realized only as it aims also at the realization of other selves. Good, he said, must be common; and by 'common' he meant non-competitive and sharable. His exposition of the idea was, however, ambiguous. If common good means—as he sometimes says—the realization of the capacities of each human soul, then, as Rashdall pointed out, the arrangements for bringing this about must involve amounts of material good that are very unequal, and therefore not common. Moreover, the capacity to enjoy, or to give, different kinds of pleasure must vary so much with different people that no real community along these lines would be attained. If the good of life is a mixture of intellectual and aesthetic attainments, it goes without saying that a good of this kind would be characterized by much variety and inequality of possession. And thus Green's criterion that true good does not admit of being competed for would be negated.

Not only so, but good of an aesthetic, intellectual, or even material type is sharable only in the sense that it is enjoyed in unequal amounts and in different ways by different people. It is *objectively* sharable; that is all. Two or more persons may warm themselves at the same fire, or be charmed by the same music. But the identity is in the object of enjoyment, not in the experience. Two men may eat the same cake or, rather, different portions of it. But by so doing they do not augment each other's share of satisfaction. Nor if one suffered from indigestion does the comfort of the other afford any relief.

Green, however, advances to a more adequate conception when he expounds 'common good' as a spiritual activity in which all may partake. It is 'a will of all which is a will of each.' In our interpretation this means that the true good is not something which A and B can have separately, but something which is good for B at the same time that it is good for A, and in consequence thereof.

Green admits that in saying that the goodwill is its own object there is a circularity of argument, which he believes to be inescapable. Dr. W. D. Lamont, in his able *Introduction to Green's Moral Philosophy*, suggests that the circle may be avoided by saying, not that the moral will is directed to its own development, but that it seeks self-realization for everyone in the sense of providing each with individual opportunities for pursuing his ends.<sup>1</sup> Such opportunities make possible the full expression 'of all those capacities and interests proper to human nature.' 'In this way,' continues Dr. Lamont, 'a man's moral perspective is likely to be more healthy if he is not bothering his head about making people "good," but is concerning himself with what, as ordinary human beings, they need.'<sup>2</sup>

Now it seems to us that there is a truth in the contention of Green that the object of the goodwill must be the goodwill itself. Surely virtue can achieve no higher end than the propagation of itself. If, on the contrary, it be said that the aim of the goodwill is to supply opportunities for physical, intellectual, and artistic development, we are attaching virtue to what is inferior to itself (though at the same time compatible therewith, as we hope shortly to make clear). We say 'inferior' because these various opportunities appeal to native and therefore involuntary capacity, and involve material conditions. A spiritual attitude in man can be fulfilled only by a purpose that is spiritual. If, for example, the goodwill be interpreted as meaning the love of all, any other aim than the attempt to create or foster such love in others would seem to be impertinent.

Moreover, when once the object of the goodwill is made to be the distribution or the equalization of opportunity, no realization of community in the strict sense is possible, as we have shown above. To repeat, there may be enjoyment on the part of many people of the same objective sources, such as parks, museums, libraries, concerts, operas,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 193, 194.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

&c. But some take more from the common stock of what the world has to offer—as well as contribute more to it—by reason of differences of intelligence and ability, and of greater financial resources, or of social status. When once you enter the non-spiritual realm you are perforce involved in all sorts of inequalities, and community of good as an ideal is vitiated by dissimilarities of production, use, and enjoyment.

Does it follow, then, that we must identify the 'content' of good with its 'form'? We think that there is no difficulty on this score where the goodwill is not abstractly conceived. To say, for instance, that love is the supreme good and that its nature is to propagate itself, does not mean that love (or the goodwill) is without a 'context.' After all, the goodwill is the will of a human being who is compact of mind and body. Love does not exist in a vacuum, but in creatures of flesh and blood in the world that we know. Why and how the goodwill is so expressed is, of course, a problem; but it is not a specifically ethical one.

Accordingly, then, the 'context' of the goodwill, i.e. of love, is man's place in this world of time and space with all the needs to which he is heir. If those needs are presented by the instincts of human nature, then the 'raw material' of virtue and vice is the same. Vice would be the loveless, i.e. selfish, use of those instincts; virtue would exercise them as instruments of love, i.e. socially.

If now it be replied that this view is little different from the view that regards the content of virtue as the provision of opportunity for all, we would point out that there is a contrast which seems to us to be great. For if you say merely that love (or the goodwill) expresses itself in the provision of social opportunities as its end, there is no guarantee that those same opportunities will not be used and enjoyed for their own sake, while the individuals themselves remain apart. Stress opportunities, make them the

end, and the result will be that the individuals will exist for the sake of the opportunities. The direct relation of the individuals to one another will fall into the background. Nay, worse may happen. Difference of opportunity may provoke envy and sunder a man from his neighbour. Indeed, Dr. Lamont realizes the danger of this, and postulates 'a balanced order of rights.'

The view we advocate is that while love will certainly express itself in the provision of opportunities—such provision is not an end in itself. The promotion of love is still the end, and opportunities are nothing more than the *instruments* for that promotion.

How far does all this agree with the teaching of Jesus? It seems at least to coincide with the injunction 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' For in love there is no separateness of interest; nay, rather, is there a positive effort to promote each other's well-being. In this sense one's own good implies the constant effort to augment the good of one's neighbour. Food, warmth, music, culture, must be enjoyed separately; but love overflows from heart to heart. Material and cultural goods are sharable in the sense that all may take from a common stock. Each enjoys what he is able to enjoy. But this enjoyment on the part of each individual does not necessarily bring about between them a union of heart and will. Now it is precisely such a unity that is effected by love. And when Green describes the ideal for human life as consisting in a 'spiritual activity in which all can partake,' he is, though somewhat vague, yet not out of harmony with the Christian doctrine of love. Green's vagueness, however, has betrayed him into the hands of critics. It cannot be denied that of late the notion of Common Good has seriously lost favour in certain quarters. Professor H. A. Prichard thinks it a contradiction in terms. Mr. Carritt, also, in his *Theory of Morals*, after pointing out its ambiguities thinks that, if its meaning is that of coherence

of willing, it is unsatisfactory. We ourselves believe that Green has grasped a great, if a partial, truth, which it is possible to free from ambiguity of statement. We have already seen that Common Good does not primarily refer to *things*, like land, which can be *used* in common. We agree with Mr. Carritt that such common ownership is in fact often a frequent source of quarrel. We also agree that if good be merely satisfaction or enjoyment, then the good of one person can never be that also of another.

What might be called a coherence theory of ethics was advocated by Prof. H. J. Paton in his book *The Good Will* (pub. 1927). By his doctrine of goodness as coherence of will he certainly stressed its social character. An act is good, he says, 'because it satisfies a social will which is manifested not only in others, but equally in myself.'<sup>1</sup> 'A tennis club organizes only a fraction of the lives of its members. . . . The coherence which is goodness must be realized in a complete or universal coherence, and that is why it must be judged by reference to the State as including within itself the whole life of all the individuals and all the societies of which it is composed. . . . The State, even when taken at its widest, is itself an incomplete and limited society, and goodness must be judged in the end by reference to a complete society including within itself all reasonable beings. . . . The fact that we are members of a State does not exclude us from the brotherhood of man or from the communion of saints.'<sup>2</sup> Prof. Paton's contribution to ethical theory seems to us so important and so valuable that we cannot forbear to make a few words of comment upon it. Surely the idea of goodness as the coherent will is at least an approximation to the Christian position that man must love his neighbour as himself. But it is necessary to safeguard the notion in the following ways:

1. Coherence of willing is not to be identified with

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 311.

similarity of action, or agreement as to material aims, or general support for social institutions. That people act in the same way need not indicate any unity of heart between them. A band of thieves, for instance, maintains but a superficial and precarious unity. They hold together only because by so doing each hopes to gain a share of the booty that may be obtained. Quarrels as to these shares, or fears of discovery, easily disrupt the band.

It is said that the Family, the Nation, the State, are all examples of coherence of willing. So to some extent they are. But the quality of the sociality behind these institutions varies greatly. Some of it is largely of the instinctive type. Some of it rises no higher than is necessary to realize the aim of mutual convenience. Occasionally it attains the height of a noble disinterestedness. On the other hand, what passes as public spirit is sometimes egoism in disguise. But there is, after all, a coherence of wills which has no essential relation to concrete purposes or practical advantages to be obtained. Indeed, it is a union, not primarily of plans or projects, but of personalities. The real object of such coherence is not the wills of other men; it is the men themselves. If we substitute the term 'love' for that of 'coherence' it will be at once realized that we cannot love a 'will.' Strictly speaking, we can love only *persons*. And to love a person is far more than to agree with his actual conations; it is to achieve a fundamental unity of life which may be quite compatible with disapproval of his acts. In the light of this exposition it is possible to 'cohere' with a 'barbarous race' without conforming to its barbarity. In this case the barbarous are loved, not because they are barbarous, but because they are fellow-humans who are capable of receiving and of reciprocating love. Christian 'coherence' is a love even of enemies.

2. Coherence of wills must be *universal*, not sectional. This is a further reason why such coherence as you find

in a band of thieves is inadequate. It is vitiated from the ethical point of view because it is inconsistent with that wider coherence which demands universal fellowship. It is not, as is Christian love, coherence with man as man. All coherence which is merely sectional is subject to this same criticism, whether it be that of families, tribes, social classes, nations or states. Coherence of willing must be interpreted in as wide a sense as possible; indeed it must not stop short of universal fraternity. So far we see no reason why Green's doctrine of Common Good, when thus safeguarded, should not be regarded as consistent with the Christian principle of the Golden Rule.

3. However, discrepancy with the Christian position appears when it is seen that Green's doctrine of Common Good lacks the definite religious basis which is so essential to the Christian ethic. Green was fond of illustrating Common Good by the life of fellowship in a family. However, a family has a very definite basis for its unity in the blood tie. The children are one through common parentage, and it is this common parentage which is the ground of the union.

Jesus did not merely say to men 'Love one another.' That, with Jesus, was inferential and secondary. His primary command was 'Love God.' It follows from this that any love of self or of neighbour must be both derivative from, and contributory to, the love of God. In loving myself and my neighbour I must in both cases seek through such love to promote the supreme love of God. And since, according to Jesus, God is Father and we are His children, potentially or actually, the aim of each child should be the development of the consciousness of sonship. Our Christian vocation is to promote in ourselves and in all men the attitude of a devout filiality.

If then, it be asked whether Christianity teaches a doctrine of Common Good the answer must be that the highest Christian good of life is certainly 'common' in

the sense of sharable, and sharable in a unique way. For it is not merely that all Christians enjoy the vision of one and the same Divine person,<sup>1</sup> who is Father and Saviour of all; but also that this enjoyment by its very nature tends to enhance the enjoyment of fellow-worshippers. Divine love flows from heart to heart; and, as it flows, it grows in volume and intensity.

Of course the enjoyment of God may, and does, vary from man to man. There is an appreciation of the Divine Fatherhood which is greater in one man than in another. But no true child of God can enjoy the consciousness of His divine relationship in any degree without trying to share this sense of sonship with his brother. Whereas a man may all alone enjoy his share of a material object like common land without augmenting his neighbour's enjoyment of his use of the same land, it is otherwise with the Christian experience of sonship. No man can enjoy God as love without seeking to promote filial love in his brother.

Indeed the realization by a number of people that they are each children of the same Divine Father will tend to generate a sense of fellowship. It will, of course, include fellowship in each other's joys and sorrows; but its supreme aim will be to develop that higher fellowship which is with the Father and the Son.

Some critics are very chary of believing that spiritual activity *can* be shared. Mr. Carritt, for instance, says<sup>2</sup> it is hard to see how my goodwill is a contribution to every one else's. But surely such a contribution is a daily occurrence, however difficult it may be for us to understand. Human souls are not, as Kant thought, independent monads. The phenomena of friendship are sufficient to convince us that it is possible, without any disintegration of personality, for one will to influence and strengthen the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dr. Kenneth Kirk's Bampton Lecture: *The Vision of God*.

<sup>2</sup> *Theory of Morals*, p. 58.



will of another. Again, it has been complained that if the good life consists in promoting goodness in others, that goodness will in turn consist in improving yet others, whose goodness is to improve others again. Thus, it is said, on this plan 'nobody is ever better off for this endless circulation of a paper currency which is never cashed.'

But there is no contradiction in the idea of our having a goodness which we both possess and also seek to promote in others. The vision of God is a good which is susceptible both of being enjoyed and promoted, and of being promoted because enjoyed. The filial experience may be both personally possessed and to some extent socially communicated. It is a well-known fact that children in their life in the home can and do strengthen each other's filial regard. We cannot share each other's responsibility; but we can assist each other's good or evil tendencies, and encourage each other's piety or irreverence.

Finally, if it be asked whether the Christian ethic can be called an ethic of self-realization, the answer would be that it is that and much more. Primarily its ideal is that of *self-dedication*, dedication, that is, to the Loving Will of God. In so dedicating ourselves we realize ourselves. But this realization is dependent upon the dedication. The Christian certainly finds his life. But he does so because he has first of all found God. His true love of himself and his fellows derives from, and is regulated by, his supreme love of God the Father.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN TENDENCIES IN ETHICS

WE start our review of modern tendencies in ethics by a brief allusion to a writer who had a distinct and, as we think, a sinister influence on the thought of the latter part of the nineteenth century. We refer to Nietzsche (1844-1900). The peculiar importance of his teaching for us is that it is openly and flagrantly antithetic to Christianity. In his *Ecce Homo* he says: 'Christian morality is the most malignant form of all falsehood. . . . It is really poisonous, decadent, weakening. It produces nincompoops, not men.'

According to Nietzsche the only object of worship is Life. The only way to life, he adds, is through heroism and courage. The supreme aim of life is power, and the will to power is the only right conduct. He condemns self-denial and humility as being anaemic. These qualities, he says, suit slaves, but not men. Tired of mediocrity of life he turns from democracy, and preaches the advent of a race of noble adventurers who will scorn ease and become daring, mighty, and triumphant. Such a select caste, of whom Caesar Borgia and Napoleon are illustrations, will be obtained by judicious breeding. It will be an aristocracy, not of birth, much less of wealth, but of *will*. It will be a race of adventurous spirits who will herald the advent in the future of still greater supermen, themselves marked by qualities of pride, courage, and self-sufficient might. Such beings will be solitary in their grandeur. To have fellowship with the common herd would be degrading to

them. Indeed, the mass of commonplace individuals are of importance only as the creators and servants of this aristocracy of the powerful.<sup>1</sup> His motto for such supermen is 'Live dangerously, and live differently from others.'

There has been much controversy as to whether Nietzsche taught that these higher men form an aristocratic *race*; or whether they are merely a few powerful and commanding personalities. Sometimes he writes as though only individuals like Napoleon, Schopenhauer, or Wagner could be supermen. At other times he appears to believe in a race of great and heroic beings to whom the rest of the world pays tribute.

However, controversy seems unnecessary. What Nietzsche himself meant may be difficult to decide; what his doctrine inevitably leads to is not hard to foresee. For if the only ideal of life is to achieve power, this will mean a struggle for ascendancy, which in the nature of the case can eventually cease only when *one* man is sufficiently strong to be master of all others. Henceforth the rest are doomed to become the tools and servants of the Conqueror.

It has been denied by some interpreters that Nietzsche's idea of power was that of brute strength, although his language at times suggests this. Without going into a prolonged discussion of this particular question, we may say that, on the whole, the 'power' which is the ideal of the superman is that which gives physical, artistic and intellectual mastery. It is a thoroughly egoistic ideal. Indeed, Nietzsche declares that the choice spirits of the world are 'cold' and 'lonely.'

In comparing the ethic of Nietzsche with that of Jesus we note that both stress the virtue of courage. Who more than Jesus told men to live hard? Who could say sterner

<sup>1</sup> In his *Will to Power*, Vol. II, p. 328 (Eng. trans.), he says that the justification of the levelled down species is 'that it exists for the service of a higher and sovereign race which stands upon it and can only be elevated upon its shoulders to the task which it is destined to perform.'

things to His followers? In all literature there is nothing much more vigorous than the saying, 'If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.'

And to be a consistent Christian you have at times to live dangerously. No one can find anaemia in the character of St. Paul. The early Christians faced labours, dangers and sufferings, and in many cases underwent martyrdom. Later, heroism was shown by numerous reformers, missionaries, and spiritual pioneers, of whom Luther, Wesley, Livingstone, James Chalmers, and others are conspicuous examples. Nietzsche said in his *Ecce Homo*, 'I am not a man; I am dynamite.' There are two sorts of dynamic power: there is that of crude passion; there is also that of a mighty zeal for justice and a tireless love of men. Surely the most dynamic figure the world has ever seen was Jesus, whose transforming influence upon human affairs does not cease, but ever grows stronger.

However, the differences between Nietzsche and Jesus in other respects are profound. If 'power' is the end of life, then power destroys all power that is not supreme. It leads to what we may call an ethical solipsism according to which only *one* person can achieve the ideal. Now this from the point of view of Christianity is absurd. Not that Christianity does not recognize that there are inequalities in life. The parables of Jesus imply that men differ in the number of talents they possess. Nietzsche teaches, however, that men are unequal, not merely in capacity or endowment, but in status: some men are naturally masters, others are naturally slaves. Christianity, on the other hand, like Stoicism, implies that men are fundamentally equal; but unlike Stoicism it passes beyond even the idea of equality to that of the *unity* of all men as children of the same Heavenly Father. Accordingly the supreme ideal of life is the privilege of all men without

exception of race or capacity. All men are called to be good, and to be good in the same sense.

In the next place, there is a gross misconception on Nietzsche's part as to what Christian morality really is. He takes Christian love to be synonymous with pity,<sup>1</sup> and accordingly he denounces such pity as being mistaken kindness, in that it seeks merely to alleviate suffering without eradicating its causes. And without doubt he was rightly angry with that form of love whose only service to society is to do ambulance work without seeking to abolish the battle which is the cause of the casualties. Indeed, he declared that virtue, as commonly conceived, just turns the world into a hospital so that everybody may be everybody else's nurse. We agree that so far as love contents itself with merely picking up the wounded in the battle of life without seeking to forestall the strife, it is certainly not love in the Christian sense. Christian love will seek, in addition, to remove those causes of conflict which set men against each other. In so far as it is practised, it removes from industry all exploitation; improves conditions of living, thereby increasing the health of society; saves men from overwork, from anxiety, thus preventing disease both of the body and the mind; instils in men habits of purity and sobriety. The morality which Nietzsche denounces as being weak, sentimental, and anaemic, is not Christian, but a caricature of it.

Again, Nietzsche and Christianity differ in their attitude to the eugenic problem. They agree as to the desirability of creating a noble race; but they differ both as to the criterion of nobility, and as to the method of attaining the end desired.

Having already said something about the different conceptions of nobility, let us now consider the method advocated by Nietzsche of realizing a noble race as he

<sup>1</sup> In defence of Nietzsche it is said by some expositors that he had in mind Christianity of the medieval type.

conceives it. He proposes selective breeding. As to this so little is known that we cannot be sure of producing those qualities in men which Nietzsche regards as supremely desirable. We cannot be certain of being able to breed a race which combines the strength of a Samson with the genius of a Socrates. But even supposing that we could be sure—a very large assumption—physical and intellectual fitness would not in itself be a guarantee of a permanent racial survival. Experience has shown that physical and mental strength in themselves tend to engender pushful competition and strife—and at last war. Now war, of course, destroys especially those who are deemed the fittest. According to a well-known writer<sup>1</sup> ‘the pushfulness of the Nordic race has lately held the world back, and for the survival of such a type the world is becoming less and less favourable.’

The Christian criterion of nobility of life is love, and its method of propagation is that of the regeneration of the heart. True, the social results may be slow, but they are sure. At first, indeed, the practice of love, in some of its aspects, may seem to tend to the increase of those who are physically and mentally unfit. It is actually said that by stepping in to protect the weak we are dangerously reversing the method of Nature, and preventing the destruction of certain stocks which are detrimental to the well-being of future generations. It is true that Christian love must for a long time to come often take the form of pity. When it sees the sick, the poor, the aged, the imbecile, it does what it can for their relief. But Christian love is much more than mere philanthropy; it does not simply care for the unfit, but also seeks to prevent their creation. In proportion as it is practised it purifies society from selfish excesses and injurious appetites. Once the heart of man becomes regenerate, the regeneration of his body and the strengthening of his mind are sooner or later

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Hobson, *Free Thought in the Social Sciences*.

assured. In a society where perfect love reigned there would be no alcoholism, no profligacy, no greed. And a society that worships neither Bacchus, Venus, Mammon, nor Mars, would not only gradually become free from racial poisons, but as to its mind would develop also a rare serenity and confidence. It is largely alcohol, sexual vice, and economic strain which fill our hospitals, asylums, and almshouses. Surely the purification of the souls of men is the soundest method of ensuring their health of body and sanity of mind. Christian love is not weak, nor does it make for weakness; on the contrary, it is strong, and makes for strength.

So far as we can gather it from the preface to one of his earlier plays,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bernard Shaw, like Nietzsche, teaches a doctrine of the superman; with, however, this difference—that supermen are not now to be a social caste existing alongside a mass of the mediocre, but are a higher stage of democracy as a whole. Humanity is to be raised by the twin processes of breeding and education. When eugenics and culture have done their work, democracy and aristocracy will be equivalent terms. So sure is (or was) Mr. Shaw of his social ideal that he declares, 'A nation of Socrateses would be much safer and happier than a nation of Wesleys, and its individuals would be higher in the evolutionary scale.'<sup>2</sup>

We all sympathize with Mr. Shaw in his desire to elevate the race. As to the social value of the Evangelical Revival under Wesley, history has given its favourable verdict, and no certificate is required from any man. From the standpoint of the Christian ethic wisdom, so far as Socrates' wisdom was merely intellectual, is not enough.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*.

<sup>2</sup> According to Archibald Henderson (*Bernard Shaw*, p. 688), 'Man is only a stage in the scale of evolution. The Life Force . . . will continue its efforts to realize itself. After aeons it will produce something more complicated than Man, that is the superman, then . . . the Angel, the Archangel.'

<sup>3</sup> If the stress is laid on the sacrificial quality of their life and work, then Socrates and Wesley should not be placed in opposition.

No blessing, to be sure, is to be pronounced on stupidity or ignorance. However, the world has never been short of wisdom of many kinds, nor is it to-day. The seat of good and evil, as we have said, lies not in the intellect, but in the *will* of man—in the ‘heart,’ or centre of motivation. What humanity needs for all its woe and sorrow is the will to peace, the will to love, the will to live for neighbours as for self, the will to glorify not itself, but God. Therefore, we put our trust still in the gospel which Wesley preached.

We do not mean that Mr. Shaw is without sympathy either towards religion or towards many of the social implications of Christianity. ‘All his life,’ says Mr. Frank Harris, ‘he has remained a religious man.’<sup>1</sup> Shaw described the teaching of Jesus (of which his view is somewhat attenuated) as ‘good sense and sound economics.’<sup>2</sup> His powerful crusade in his plays against the evils of poverty gave the public and the politicians ‘furiously to think.’ But he grossly misunderstands the genius of Christianity when he declares that ‘it is only by political means that the gospel of Jesus can be put into practice.’<sup>3</sup>

Of course, force never really changed the will of man; for the problems of society, being problems of will, can be solved only by persuasion and consent. Hence the relevance of Jesus’ word to Nicodemus: ‘Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.’<sup>4</sup>

Even the communism which Mr. Shaw deduces from Christianity would fail of itself. How long, for instance, in the present state of human nature would equality of incomes remain stable? You cannot kill avarice by Act of Parliament. Besides, equality as a social ideal is too quantitative a conception. The features of human life which are susceptible of measurement are after all comparatively superficial. If you ‘equalize’ men, it is mostly

<sup>1</sup> *Bernard Shaw*, p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, p. viii.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. cxiv.

<sup>4</sup> John iii. 7.



with reference to questions of external administration and treatment in matters of law, of government, of regimentation. Even though both political and economic equality be secured, yet when you have made the opportunities of men in these respects equal as far as may be, the individuals so equalized may remain apart, and, as we have suggested, actually become hostile. The ideal of equality does not carry any guarantee that the equalized opportunities will not be selfishly used. Of course, men are all qualitatively different in body, mind, and temperament. Thus any *quantitative* ideal for their well-being is bound to be ill-fitting and unsuitable. Nor is such an ideal an inference from the Christian ethic. It is the *unity*, rather than the equality of men, for which Christianity stands. And this ideal of unity demands, not equality, but rather *equity*, of opportunity. Unity means brotherhood; and it is only as we all become brothers in Christ Jesus that social and material good can be safely and wisely added unto us. In such a brotherhood the members of the family will require different kinds of opportunity for the expression of their several abilities. But this sort of inequality will not destroy, but rather build up the household of humanity.

On the subject of sex relations Mr. Shaw is scarcely in line with the Christian position. In his *Man and Superman* it is definitely stated that the sex relation is not a personal or friendly relation at all. And he appears to approve of this detachment of sex intercourse from any spiritual bond between the parties, when the purpose is that of mere pleasure or eugenic reproduction. At the same time he recognizes that a mere sex basis is hopeless when the relations are to be permanent.<sup>1</sup> It is as though he held that the union of man and woman must be spiritual only when permanent life together is contemplated. If, however, sex union is permissible under less permanent conditions, when in the nature of the case spiritual accord

<sup>1</sup> *Bernard Shaw*, by Frank Harris, p. 237.

between the parties is precluded, then we are left with the dualistic view that, on the one hand, man is merely an intelligent animal, and yet, on the other hand, that he is a spiritual creature with a spiritual purpose. Man must, of course, be either one or the other. Now the Christian view is that man's body is the instrument of his soul, and that every bodily activity must tend to the good of society and the glory of God. Christianity, therefore, does not contemplate the act of sexual intercourse except under such conditions of permanence as will realize these lofty purposes. Such conditions are provided by a monogamous and enduring marriage.

Sex experience which is regarded merely as a source of enjoyment is nothing more than an 'exchange of egotisms.' If it is exploited merely for the purpose of propagation, it is still unworthy of the dignity of man and woman. Husband and wife are called to be more than parents; they are human and rational; they are persons; they are souls; nay more, they are the children of God. 'Know ye not,' said St. Paul, 'that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? . . . therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.'

By other writers sex experience for its own sake has been advocated as part of the duty of self-expression and in the interest of the ideal of Freedom. This movement of thought has been characterized by the term Romanticism. It is practically a doctrine of the autonomy of impulse. For instance, Mr. Aldous Huxley, in his book, *Do What You Will*, declares that 'all the manifestations of life are godlike and every element of human nature has a right—a divine right even—to exist and find expression.' There is the same apotheosis of desire in the writings of the late D. H. Lawrence, who says: 'God in me is my desire. Suddenly God moves afresh in me, a new motion. It is a new desire. So a plant unfolds itself, leaf after leaf, and then buds, till it blossoms. So do we, under the

unknown impulse of desires, which arrive in us from the unknown.'<sup>1</sup> This creed of the anarchic freedom of impulses is sometimes called Libertinism, or (to use Irving Babbitt's word) 'Eleutheromania.'

What this doctrine of the autonomy of impulse will lead to it is not very difficult to see. In human nature there are many impulses, not all of which are equal in natural strength, but some of which at times possess inordinate power, like hunger, thirst, and sex. This claim of impulses to autonomy cannot but provoke an internecine struggle and set up a kind of civil war in the soul.

The state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection.

The struggle can cease only by the dominance of that impulse which happens to be strongest. I say 'happens,' for it is not always the same impulse that gains the victory, whether in the lives of different men, or even in the same individual.

However, the decision of the issue by sheer strength will result only in chaos and frustration. If any one instinct gains a monopoly of power, it will tend to destroy, not only its competitors, but itself also. The man who lives to eat will, ere long, by his very excess be unable to eat. The scholar who lives only to gratify the instinct of curiosity in the pursuit of knowledge will, by his overstrain, pay the price either in ruined health or in mental disease or in both. Sex, if continually dominant, will prove self-defeating; in an enfeebled body the passion burns itself out.

As for the weaker competitors in the struggle, they too suffer by defeat and the continued lack of exercise. The

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Prof. De Burgh in the *Hibbert Journal*, April 1934. Cf. also the following from his *A Modern Lover*: 'Life is beautiful so long as it is consuming you, when it is rushing through you, destroying you, life is glorious. It is best to roar away, like a fire with a great draught, white-hot, to the last bit. It's when you burn a slow fire and save fuel that life's not worth having.'

victory of certain instincts imperils the life of others. Darwin confessed that his devotion to science had atrophied his artistic nature, especially his love of music. An excessive love of sport is a menace to culture; too much culture, on the other hand, weakens the capacity for play. Flesh can crush spirit, and spirit can so negate the body as to dehumanize its victim.

The doctrine of the autonomy of impulse will set up a conflict also between the individual and his neighbours, for presumably others are entitled to practise the same policy of self-expression. There is no guarantee that a society of such 'free' persons will escape collisions; on the contrary, conflicts will be inevitable. You cannot claim the right to assert yourself without at the same time inviting claims to counter-assertion. Attempts to invade the property of others will provoke retaliation. If you try to kill, others will try to kill you. You cannot gratify as you please the lusts of the flesh without involving others in similar lusts, sometimes indeed by a cruel exploitation of the innocent. The kind of life that would ensue in such a society of egoists was long ago described by Thomas Hobbes as one that would be 'poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

This doctrine of the autonomy of impulse runs counter to the traditional philosophy of life, which is as old, at least, as the thought of the ancient Greeks. One of the earliest Greek maxims for conduct was the saying: 'Nothing too much.' The ideal was that of control, balance, proportion. Plato, in particular, held a hierarchical view of the parts of human nature. Aristotle's characteristic doctrine was that virtue is a mean between extremes. The classical tradition re-appears in English philosophy in such men as Shaftesbury and Bishop Butler. Both these thinkers regard the nature of man as forming a constitution in relation to which the expression of any impulse must find its justification.

Shaftesbury's view is that parts and proportions obtain between the passions such as subsist between the organs of the body; that each species of creature is itself a system; and that all creatures together are parts of a universal system. Not every expression of impulse is therefore right. There are some 'affections' which are intruders in human nature, and which he calls 'unnatural.' Man lives 'naturally,' he says, when the main impulses, i.e. the public and private affections, are balanced with one another.

Butler, following Shaftesbury and the Stoics, adopted 'natural' life as his ideal for man. But he insisted that in the case of man 'natural' life means the subordination of passions, appetites, and affections to the control of 'superior principles,' of which conscience is the supreme. No ethical thinker declares more emphatically that the mere strength of an impulse is no criterion of its authority. Lamenting the lack of power in conscience, he says: 'Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world.'<sup>1</sup>

However, modern Romanticists are not so naive as to trust impulse implicitly. They do not abjure control or guidance of any kind. No one can feel the pressure of all his impulses at once, much less gratify them all at once. Indeed the instincts which have to do with the preservation and reproduction of life are intermittent in their activity. Again, most people are much too sophisticated to favour mere piecemeal gratification. Moreover, the community puts a limit to individual licence. Some principle of regulation is inevitable. Even those who favour the claims of sex to a large share of influence know that they cannot live for sex all the time. Even Mr. Bertrand Russell acknowledges that 'sex cannot dispense with an ethic.'<sup>2</sup> So far as one can discover, Mr. Russell's

<sup>1</sup> Sermon II, 'Upon Human Nature.' <sup>2</sup> *Marriage and Morals*, p. 241.

ethic is a form of Hedonism. And indeed there seems no other end for a Romanticist who becomes sophisticated. Should any other end be adopted, such as efficiency, or fullness of life, it is doubtful if such ends would finally commend themselves, did they not lead to happiness.

We have already considered Hedonism from the standpoint of Christianity. At present we merely observe that if happiness be the end—whether that of the individual or of society—few would say that Libertinism is the means thereto.

But it is not because Libertinism cannot be justified at the bar of happiness that it is unsatisfactory as a theory of conduct. Its real condemnation is that, unlike the Christian ethic, it attempts to decide how life should be lived without taking any account of the ultimate nature of the universe in which man is placed. Both Shaftesbury and Butler considered man in this wider setting; but neither worked out the relation between the microcosm of human nature and the microcosm of the world as a whole. To both these thinkers human nature was a self-enclosed unit. They endeavoured to find a sufficient principle of control within the limits of that nature itself. It is true that in Butler's case his Christian theology would keep breaking in. But it broke 'in' rather than 'out.' The Christian world view was presupposed and was not organically related to his ethic.

Is a satisfactory principle for the control of impulse to be found on the merely human level? *Humanism*, which answers this question in the affirmative, takes no account of metaphysical or religious considerations, as will appear from the following quotation: 'In so far as men have now lost their belief in a heavenly king, they have to find some other ground for their moral choice than the revelation of His will. It follows necessarily that they must find the tests of righteousness wholly within human experience. . . . Such a morality may properly be called

humanism, for it is centred not in superhuman, but in human nature. When men can no longer be theists, they must, if they are civilized, become humanists. . . . They must live, therefore, in the belief that the duty of man is not to make his will conform to the will of God, but to the surest knowledge of the conditions of human happiness.’<sup>1</sup>

Take again, such a statement as the following: ‘Since there is no principle under modern conditions which authorizes the re-establishment of a moral code, the moralist, unless he revises his premises, becomes entirely ineffectual. To revise his premises can . . . mean only one thing: that he occupies himself with the problem of how to encourage . . . that cultivation of disinterestedness which renders passion innocent and an authoritative morality unnecessary.’<sup>2</sup>

Lippmann stresses the need for ‘disentangling virtue from its traditional sanctions and the metaphysical framework which has hitherto supported it.’ At the same time he is clear that the ‘basic element of modern morality is disinterestedness.’<sup>3</sup> And he continues: ‘Since men are unable to find a principle of order in the authority of a will outside themselves, there is no place they can find it except in an ideal of the human personality. But they do not have to invent such an ideal out of hand. The ideal way of life for men is that of “disinterestedness.”’<sup>4</sup>

The term ‘disinterestedness’ is somewhat ambiguous; but it may be taken as equivalent to the practice of brotherhood, and to this extent this ‘modern morality,’ as it is called, is not modern so far as its content is concerned. Indeed it is as old at least as Confucius, Mo Tse, Buddha, the Stoics, and Jesus. What is distinctive about it is, not its content, but its basis, or rather absence of basis; though even in this respect it is scarcely original. It is, however,

<sup>1</sup>Lippmann, *Preface to Morals*, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 323.

<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 326.

a morality which definitely seeks to find its authority exclusively within humanity.

It is just here that Humanism comes into violent collision with the Christian ethic. In Christianity there is no rigid separation of the human from the divine, of the ethical from the religious. The commandment that we should love our neighbours as ourselves is secondary in rank and based on the primary command that we should love God to the utmost of our powers. In Christianity human nature is not an enclosed and self-sufficient system, as it was to Shaftesbury, and in effect, though not in intention, to Butler. As we have said, Butler's personal background was definitely Christian, as might be expected from one who was a bishop of the Church. But, as already remarked, his Christianity was external, so to speak, to his moral philosophy, and was not wrought into the texture of his ethical system. This will be apparent from such a passage as that in Sermon XI 'on the Love of our Neighbour,' where he says: 'Christianity lays us under new (*sic*) obligations to a good life as by it the will of God is more clearly revealed, and as it affords additional (*sic*) motives to the practice of it, over and above those which arise out of the nature of virtue and vice.' Shaftesbury and Butler, therefore, remain virtually on the humanistic level in their philosophy of the moral life.

But it may be asked: 'Did not St. Paul occupy the same ground, when he declared that the Gentiles were a "law unto themselves" (Rom. ii. 14), since they had the work of the law written in their hearts in the form of conscience?' The apostle, however, was saying in this passage merely that the Gentiles have a knowledge of moral good sufficient to make them responsible and to expose them to the condemnation which rested upon the Jews. Now this is not the same thing as to say that moral law is independent of an external or Divine authority. Rather is it to state the quite different, yet complementary, truth



that the law of God is not a mere external and arbitrary fiat, but finds endorsement in the breast of man. A morality that secures no human consent or response is as baseless as a morality that is without Divine sanction. God's will is in harmony with the highest will of man, because man is made in the image of God. Deep calls unto deep: the Divine in man and the Divine without him are in accord. If man had no clue to the Divine language, God's voice would speak to him in vain. On the other hand, a voice in his own soul which speaks to him, however imperiously, if it is nothing but a voice, would be a mockery and a delusion. The passage from the Epistle to the Romans reminds us that the seat of moral authority cannot be entirely outside us. A merely external will cannot be a guide for man; it would make obedience slavish and so non-moral. The good must at least be something which we ourselves approve and evaluate. In that sense morality must have what may be called a humanistic basis.

But unless we buttress these moral intuitions by some sort of metaphysical world-view or religious faith, their hold upon us will be feeble and insecure. If, for instance, we believe that we are in the grip of material forces only, then in our conduct we shall tend to take the line of least resistance. If, on the other hand, we are convinced that Love is built into the very foundation of the Universe, we shall be stimulated to cherish love in our own practice.

Prof. Irving Babbitt writes: 'What is needed just now is a revival of the ethical will on the secular level, where it is felt as the will to justice, rather than on the religious level, where it is felt as a will to peace.'<sup>1</sup> But so to oppose religion and morality is to beg the question. Religion is not concerned solely or primarily with peace of mind. It deals with those world reasons on which justice itself is based, and without which there can be

<sup>1</sup> *Democracy and Leadership*, p. 196.

no such thing as real peace. Indeed justice itself has no rationale save on a religious and ethical interpretation of the universe.

Consider the humanistic ideal of 'disinterestedness.' We firmly believe that man is by nature social—that, psychologically speaking, he is made for brotherhood. But obviously, too, there is an egoistic tendency at work in human nature. If this proves too strong for the social impulse, there seems no reason on secular grounds why it should not hold sway. If the individual prefers to seek his own pleasure rather than the good of others, how is he going to be gainsaid? What obligation can be brought to bear on him to make him change his preference? If it be told him that the wise always find their pleasure by seeking the pleasure of others, he may reply that he prefers to be unwise and to seek his own pleasure solely; in which case he seems to be unanswerable. Rousseau thought that fraternity was natural to men; but it is natural only in the sense of being ideal, not in the sense of being inevitable. At the time of the French Revolution actual fraternity was sadly to seek.

One cannot, of course, deny that men have lived and died for others without the help, apparently, of any religious inspiration. In some of these cases it is easy to trace in their heredity the influence of pious ancestors who learnt through the love of God love to their brethren. Moreover, there is much religion often present in those who either do not know it or who do not like to own it. Their religious attitude may differ more or less widely from that of others, but is nevertheless real. Indeed it is a Christian belief that God is present in all men—in those who never suspect His presence, but who yet manifest the divine all unconsciously. Further, in the course of the centuries Christianity has influenced institutions, traditions and customs to such an extent as to make it difficult, if not impossible, for the individual to divest

himself of its inspiration and effects. The very freedom of speech, for instance, with which the atheist denounces religion, and Christianity in particular, is itself a result, directly or indirectly, of the Christian doctrine of the supreme value of personality. On the other hand, it must be remembered that there is a great deal of quasi-social enthusiasm which is little more than inverted egoism: men will sometimes labour for the rights of others from a sense of personal grievance and in revolt against their own misfortunes.

When, however, we ask the question: 'Why should I love my neighbour as myself?' especially if there is any disinclination so to do, there seems *no* answer on humanistic grounds.

The Christian ethic bases its doctrine of brotherhood on the faith that God Himself is Love, and is the Father of all men. It follows that a faith of this kind will make a great difference between the Humanistic and the Christian view on some of the problems of conduct, such as the relations of the sexes, marriage, and the family. If Humanism, as it is said, represents and proceeds from the scientific spirit, which is devoted to discovery, Christianity implies that the scientific method, while it has given man an amazing knowledge and control of Nature, is after all finally inadequate to man's needs. Man inevitably seeks the 'why' as well as the 'how' of the world. Science can inform him of the 'how,' but hardly of the 'why.' And yet man ever presses on to try to know the 'why,' and in his age-long pursuit he will not be deflected. So he becomes an incorrigible philosopher and theologian. So far as he remains within the bounds of mere reason, he is a philosopher; so far as he lets his intuition and his faith bear him onward, he is religious and theological. To this eternal quest of man Christianity offers a specific answer. It assures him that in and through and over all things there is God, who is Spirit, personal, and loving;

who, as Father of all, has shown His sacrificial love in His incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. To this Divine love man is called to make his response by faith, a faith indeed which is at once religious and moral, religious as to its Divine object, moral in its human outworking. Christian faith is inspired by this love of God which it then reflects on the human plane in a life of service.

It is from this religious point of view that the Christian considers every problem of conduct. The appeal of the Humanist is to human nature. As far as the Christian is concerned, human nature certainly suggests much, presents many problems, asks many questions; but of itself it can decide little. Man is not self-sufficient either in respect of his existence or of its meaning. The mere instincts of human nature are silent as to their own ultimate meaning and purpose. How far instincts should be gratified depends, not on their strength or persistence, but upon the whole context, personal, social, and especially religious, of the individual's life. In particular, the instinct of sex has no intrinsic claim to freedom of expression. To maintain that it has is to isolate it from its setting in the soul of man, from the claims of one's neighbours, and from one's duty to God. It is the teaching of Christianity that man is not a mere animal, but a creature of reason with responsibilities to his fellows, and above all a son of God whose temple and shrine should be found in human nature.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

MORALITY is one thing: theories about it are another. Accepting the Christian ethic as the ideal standard of morality, we must try in this final chapter to appraise the efforts of the theorists in the light of that standard. We have already offered criticisms of their views as we have considered them separately. It seems desirable now to gather those criticisms together so as to make the comparison with Christian teaching less detailed and more comprehensive.

All agree, as we must, on the universality and antiquity of morality. Man, indeed, is a moral being in the sense that he has within him the potentiality of the good life. He has always made the distinction of a better and a worse in the actions both of himself and his neighbours. Judged from a modern standpoint the conscience of primitive man was doubtless crude and undeveloped. It was often darkened by superstitions and lusts. Nevertheless, in some way it was always active. Moreover, in its activity it was generally associated with some kind of religious view of the world. At any rate, those who trace the historical development of morality to Egypt point out that as long ago as the fourth millennium before Christ the Sun-god was 'viewed from a moral angle,' and was supposed to guide human life in accordance 'with distinctions between right and wrong.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly amongst the earliest Babylonians the worship of Sin, the Moon-god, was intimately connected with the practice of morality.<sup>2</sup>

It was, of course, much later in the history of the world

<sup>1</sup> Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 338.

that speculative thought about the nature and sanctions of morality arose. The aim of the philosopher was to understand the meaning of the good life. We have passed in review some of the main theories of those who sought to arrive at an explanation. The attitude of Christianity to morality is not theoretical, but practical. Condemning, as it does, the evil that is in the world it seeks to change evil into good; and it views the good life in vital association with religion—as the outcome, indeed, of devotion to the love of God as expressed in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Though, however, the attitude of Christianity to ethics is not primarily theoretical, yet we suggest that even from the theoretical point of view its doctrine of the good life possesses a completeness and an adequacy which are lacking in the typical theories of morals.

It is unnecessary to say more about what we have called Romanticism. This is not so much a theory of the moral life as an apology for its absence. It may call its ideal that of freedom; but from the Christian standpoint such freedom is really licence, and immoral.

Our review of the classical theories of ethics will have served to reveal their characteristic defect—that of *abstraction*. They regard morality as associated either with some *one* element of human nature; or with the individual apart from the community; or with man in isolation from the universe in which he is placed.

Of the theories which identify the good with some one aspect of human nature there are at least two examples, that of Hedonism and that of the Rationalism of Kant. Hedonism stresses the affective side of human experience and regards the good as consisting of pleasure. Kantian Rationalism, emphasizing the intellectual aspect, bases morality on the principle of non-contradiction.

The schools which *virtually* detach the individual from the community in their conception of the moral life are numerous, including not only the Hedonistic and the

Rationalistic which have been already mentioned, but many others.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, individualism is the common defect of all the chief classical theories of morals. Moralists have implied that the individual, like some Robinson Crusoe, could be good all alone.

It is not, of course, suggested that the standard writers on ethics consciously contemplate the individual as a Robinson Crusoe. On the contrary, they make ample recognition of the fact that the individual lives his life in society. Indeed, any theory which did not in some manner take account of this social environment would surely be fantastic. All schools of ethical thought acknowledge that a man has neighbours. Even those thinkers who favour a doctrine of Egoism admit the existence and importance of society, though, for Egoism, neighbours are no more than means to the good or the happiness of the individual. The social references made by moralists of other schools are not as significant for ethics as they appear to be. For they virtually maintain that the self can be moral apart from any attitude to its neighbours. Any such attitude is but incidental, and not essential, to one's morality. We saw that the Kantian view of goodness is uni-personal, rather than inter-personal. Man is an 'end in himself.' There is a goodness which is his own; the goodness which he must seek to confer on others is of a different type—in the Kantian case, it is happiness.

We must not be deceived by the apparently social nature of the teaching of such a school as that of Moral Sense, which makes much of the duty of benevolence and the principle of sympathy. The recognition of the social affections by this school was in its day a great advance. Nevertheless, we think it was of more significance for psychology than for ethics. For the ethic that was

<sup>1</sup> I have been reminded, however, that the orthodox Hegelian school submerged the individual in the State. This seems to me not so much a solution of the *ethical* problem as its abandonment.

developed was social only in a superficial sense; the doctrine was really one of moral individualism. It may seem strange that in such writers as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler, and Adam Smith there should be abundant recognition of the interaction between the individual and his neighbours, and yet no sense of the problem which such interaction raises, nor any inkling of that vital ethical unity of *ego* with *alter* which is the heart of the Christian ethic. To these thinkers, as to some others, our neighbours are of no more importance than to present incidental claims to our conscience, or to be the mere objects of our compassion as recipients of happiness. Butler makes much of the principle of benevolence in human nature—of which the purpose is described by him sometimes as the ‘public good,’ and sometimes as happiness; but this same principle is to be subordinated to conscience. On the whole, Butler appears to teach that our regard for others must take the form of seeking their happiness in obedience to the behests of our own conscience. Though Butler all the time views the individual in a social setting, other individuals seem to have no higher status than to provide a mere setting whereby the individual can develop his own character. Apparently a moral life for the individual would be still possible, if society were out of the picture. However, it is easy to be unjust to Butler, and to misrepresent him, as no one has shown more ably than Prof. A. E. Taylor.<sup>1</sup> So it is necessary carefully to note that Butler devoted two sermons to the exposition of the Scriptural passage ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ However, in Sermon XII, he definitely says that the love of our neighbour ‘implies . . . a disposition to produce happiness.’ And when he discusses its effects, he describes them as charitableness, the moderation of party feeling, the prevention or healing of all strife. When he expounds the meaning of the words ‘as thyself,’ he understands that

<sup>1</sup> In his *Philosophical Studies*, 1934.



the love of our neighbour must be 'of the same kind' as the love of ourselves, and of 'the same degree.' This love of ourselves is explained to mean the cultivation of our own happiness. By analogy, then, the love of our neighbour will mean the endeavour to promote happiness in *him*. Thus, after all, the relation of the neighbour to the self is of a quasi-external nature. The love of the neighbour appears to be no more than the performance of felicitic services. Indeed, towards the close of the sermon Butler states: 'We can therefore owe no man anything, but only to further and promote his happiness, according to our abilities.'

Now we are far from suggesting that the love of our neighbour does not include all those beneficent activities which Butler describes. But we miss in his exposition that spiritual unity between self and neighbour, quasi-organic in character, which the Christian ethic appears to us to inculcate. Sometimes he seems on the brink of this truth, as when in one passage in Sermon XII he says: 'There are blessings in life, which we share in common with others; peace, plenty, freedom, healthful seasons. But real benevolence to our fellow-creatures would give us the notion of a common interest in a stricter sense.' It is this 'stricter sense of a common interest' which does not further emerge in his exposition. For lack of this 'stricter sense of a common interest' Butler's theory must be classed as virtually individualistic in the sense explained.

In the next place, just as many of the theories of the moralists err by abstracting the individual from the community, so they consider man in isolation from the universe, and conceive morality as entirely independent of any metaphysical or religious view of the world. This is certainly true of the Hedonistic school; and it is, of course, the characteristic standpoint of Humanism. Many to-day regard ethics as an independent science. Now undoubtedly there are certain aspects of morality which

require only the scientific method, such as the evolution of conduct and the growth of the moral judgement. Moral customs are appropriately studied historically and comparatively. But to treat the subject of morality in entire independence of any metaphysical or religious world-view is to regard man as nothing more than a moral being. And so to regard him is to fly in the face of the evidence at least of anthropology, according to which man throughout his history is a religious as well as a moral being. As we have already pointed out, morality and religion are historically usually associated. The two attitudes are united in the idealism of Plato. Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, also conceived the idea of a complete harmony, or *homologia*, between God, the universe, and man. The modern idealism of Green, again, maintains the essential unity of the finite and the Infinite consciousness, the identity of the human and the Divine thought in the soul of man.

Other moralists, however, in their study of the ethical problem take no account of anything beyond and above man. It is true that Kant worked out a metaphysic of ethics; but his postulates of freedom, God, and immortality are merely regulative conceptions *brought in* to make his theory of morality complete.

Now it is not only the history of man which should restrain those who would sunder this ancient alliance of morality and religion; philosophy itself should deter the student from any partial view of man's status and station in the world. Nor can the purpose of human life be settled by psychology. The mere strength of man's instincts raises the question of duty. The study of human nature, therefore, must be supplemented by an inquiry into man's relation to the universe. A metaphysic is indispensable, such as is neither the superstructure nor the basis of ethics, but both together—a construction indeed of the unitary thought of the practical and theoretical reason.

In comparison with the abstractions of moral theories (severing, as they do, aspects of experience from their context in human nature; separating the individual from society, and man from the universe), Christianity presents a much more concrete and complete doctrine of conduct. Not that the history of ethics does not show instances of adumbration of the Christian position. Every idealist theory is to some extent in line with the Christian view that goodness is built into the very nature of the universe. And as for the *content*, as distinguished from the *form*, of the Christian ethic—it may be sufficient to repeat that the principle of love, as expressed in the Golden Rule, has had both ancient and world-wide recognition.

That the Christian ethic escapes the abstractions just described will be apparent in the first place from the fact that *it finds the seat of good in personality as a whole*. Not only among the Greeks but also in Oriental faiths stress is laid on *knowledge* as the indispensable condition of virtue. We explained in our chapter on Hellenism that the Greeks taught that a superior power of wisdom achieved a higher kind of virtue. Evidence of this caste morality is only too conspicuous in Plato and Aristotle. Feeling, also, is another aspect of experience with which, from the time of the Cyrenaics and the Epicureans, morality has been identified. In Christianity, man's goodness is a question neither of knowledge nor of feeling exclusively, but of the attitude of the personality as a whole. 'Out of the heart are the issues of life.' No special form of culture is essential, nor any specific emotional state. What is required is the surrender of the personality to the appeal of Divine love. In this surrender there is no distortion of human nature. There is no suppression of the elements either of knowledge or of feeling, nor any development of one to the detriment of the other.

The surrender certainly implies self-denial. But in this case to deny the self is not to maim it, but only to slay

its egoism. In the Christian, self lives on; yea, its vitality is increased; but it no longer lives for itself. It has become dedicated with all its powers and possibilities to the love of God and the service of man. Indeed, it is this identification of the supreme interest of the individual with that of his neighbour that marks the contrast with those ethical theories which sever the individual from the community, and which make morality uni-personal. We have seen that even Kant virtually teaches an individualistic ethic. The same, we found, was true of Butler. We have just seen that according to Butler self is related to neighbour, and vice-versa, only as a purveyor of happiness. Butlerian self-love directs us to seek our own happiness; and benevolence, that of our neighbours. But the mutual cultivation of happiness does not necessarily produce a spiritual unity between the parties. The cultivation of each other's happiness may, of course, be an effect of such unity, but does not cause it. Indeed there is nothing in happiness to cement the souls of men. The very distinction of two *principles* in human nature, one directed to the interest of self,<sup>1</sup> and the other, to the interest of neighbours—has in it the seeds of dualism. Once divide the higher impulses of the soul in this manner, and you can never thereafter harmonize them or make them concentric. Jesus made possible a 'common good' between self and neighbour by directing the aim of both to God. Each must live as a son of the Father, and seek to promote each other's filiality. We must love ourselves and our neighbours, as they must love themselves and us, for the glory of God. This common devotion to one and the same Divine Father unifies the lives of men—in fact, makes them into a spiritual family, a veritable 'household of faith.'

Prof. Nygren says, 'The idea of self-love is alien to the New Testament. . . . Self-love is man's natural condi-

<sup>1</sup>The *instinct* of self-preservation is, of course, not the same thing as a 'principle' of self-love which Butler calls 'superior' and 'reasonable.'

tion; it is also the basis of the perversion of his will to evil . . . so far from love to one's neighbour supposing and including self-love, it excludes it and overcomes it.' <sup>1</sup>

As to this we would say that everything depends upon the meaning of 'self-love' in this connexion. On the score of mere logic it seems reasonable that if it is right to love one's neighbour, it is right to love one's self, for the self of the one is as really a self as that of the other. When, however, we bring in the Christian context—as we have it in the New Testament—we see that the love of our neighbour, which might otherwise be nothing more than a generous impulse to make him happy, is fully right only when such love has the definite object of directing him God-wards. If, as Jesus said, God is the true object of human devotion, then there is no love of neighbour which is adequately Christian which does not seek to develop in him the sense of heavenly sonship. But, surely, since we ourselves are also creatures of God, and destined to be His devoted children, our love must be turned also upon ourselves with a view to the development of the sense of our own divine sonship. Such a love of self is not a love of the exclusive, independent self; it has no relation to egoism; it is really a love which has lost all partiality and prejudice, for its true direction is God-ward. In its scope it includes a zeal for all the children of men along with ourselves, that God may be magnified. We say 'a zeal for all the children of men,' for fraternity is the implication of filiality. The Christian ethic is, thus, revolutionary in its sociology; it aims to 'brother all the souls on earth.' But it differs from secularism in that it bases fraternity on devotion to God as Father, and uses it, not as a means to a material result, but as the only way in which earthly goods can be made consecrate to God.

Of the two words used in the Epistles<sup>2</sup> to denote love—*philadelphia* and *agape*—the former is but a particular

<sup>1</sup> *Agape and Eros*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 2 Peter i. 7.

application of the latter to describe the brotherly affection which should bind all who belong to the Christian household of faith; the latter is the love which in addition goes out towards all, to those, indeed, who have never realized their relationship to the Heavenly Father. It is unfortunate that in English we so frequently use one and the same word, love, to denote very different kinds of affection. Christian love is distinguished from other forms by at least three characteristics.

In the *first* place it is *voluntary*. This distinguishes it from sex-love and from friendship, both of which are to some extent involuntary. We 'fall' in love where sex relations are concerned, for sex attraction arises partly out of physiological differences and partly from the charm exercised by beauty of form, by qualities of mind, or by manner. Normally such sex-love is exclusive. Friendship, again, depends upon affinities of taste or disposition, which in some cases co-exist with opposite mental qualities.

It is sometimes said that those attitudes of evangelical love which in the Beatitudes are pronounced blessed cannot be immediately created by the will, and so are only semi-voluntary. Of course, in the very nature of the case meekness, mercifulness, pure-heartedness, poverty of spirit, and zeal for righteousness as permanent attitudes of the soul can be developed only by habit, and therefore gradually. Any difficulty in forming these habitual dispositions is due not to their being unsuitable 'material' for volition, but to the will's own entail of weakness. However, habits are formed out of individual acts of volition; and it is quite within the compass of the will by definite acts of volition to take up those attitudes of soul commended by Jesus, and to repeat them till they attain fixity and permanence. Indeed, in the mature Christian soul such attitudes attain a spontaneity of expression which fulfils every moral demand without any sense of constraint. All is love, yet all is law.

In the *second* place Christian love is *universal* in its scope. Other kinds of love, such as those of sex and of friendship, are exclusive; Christian love is devoted to man as man. Love of race and love of country are certainly powerful passions. But patriotism is not enough, as Nurse Cavell said with her dying breath. There are, of course, to-day many international movements by which those who have common economic interests seek to unite their forces. But in these movements there is scarcely that lofty type of love which loves man as man. In Christian love there is nothing sectional or national, however much Christians may have failed to practise it. Nevertheless, an increasing number of the followers of Christ go out to the ends of the earth, penetrate its dark places, visit its most abandoned regions, with no other aim than to spread abroad the love of God in Christ.

The *third* characteristic of Christian love—its *religious* basis—has already been stressed and requires but little further discussion.

It remains for us, however, to draw out the contrast between theoretical and Christian ethics in respect of this attitude to religion. The moralists, in addition to abstracting parts of human nature from the whole and detaching the individual from the community, sever man from God. Theoretical ethics are for the most part *autonomous* rather than *theonomous*, to use Martensen's terminology. The Christian ethic is definitely theonomous. It unites morality and religion. The command to love our neighbour as ourselves is associated with the command to love God supremely. It is not co-ordinate in rank with it, but definitely subordinate; it is 'secondary.'

The Beatitudes are neither solely religious nor solely ethical in content, but ethico-religious. It would be an artificial classification to say with some that half of them are God-ward in their reference, and half, man-ward. The attitudes of mind which are pronounced 'blessed,' when

compared with their Old Testament analogies, are seen to be religious as well as moral. Those who are 'poor in spirit' are humble before God; those who 'mourn' sorrow over their defection from God; the 'meek' are those who wait on the Lord; the 'righteousness' which is the object of hunger and thirst is really piety; 'mercifulness' is defined only by its relation to the character of God; 'purity of heart' is primarily single-minded devotion to the object of worship; and the 'making of peace' is essentially an aim inferable from the relation of men to God as Father.

The same close association of the religious and the moral is to be found in the Epistles, especially those of St. Paul. The life which we call ethically good is there declared to be the result of Divine co-operation with man. The graces of the Christian character are 'fruits of the Spirit.' Love, which is the fulfilling of the law, is energized by faith. What is of special significance is the Pauline antithesis, which is not, as with the moralists, between good and evil, but between the Spirit and the flesh. 'Walk in the Spirit,' he says, 'and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'<sup>1</sup> Obviously by 'flesh' is not meant the body or anything exclusively physical, since what are described as 'works of the flesh'<sup>2</sup> are what we should call forms of spiritual evil; for example, 'hatred,' 'emulations,' 'strife,' 'envyings,' &c. The term 'flesh' appears to describe the will of man as it functions solely on the earthly or secular level. By contrast, 'the Spirit' means man's will as regenerated by Divine grace and inspired by the Spirit of God. A similar antithesis is that between the 'pneumatic' and the 'psychic' man; which, as an old writer puts it, is the contrast between human nature under the control of a higher, even a Divine power, and human nature in its own native element of self and sin.

It is also significant that in the Gospels there is no

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 19.



mention of the term virtue (*aretē*), which was such a common word with the Greek philosophers. Nor is there any instance of the use of the word for 'conscience.' On the other hand, much is said about 'life'; so much, in fact, that man's end and aim may be said to be the possession of life of a certain high quality termed 'aeonian.' 'I am come,' said Jesus, 'that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.'<sup>1</sup> And that love is of the essence of this 'life' is elsewhere expressly stated: for the love of the brethren is declared to be the evidence that we have passed from death unto life.<sup>2</sup> 'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.' Moreover, it is stated that the Father hath life in Himself,<sup>3</sup> which life must be of the nature of love, since God is declared to be Love. So far, then, as man participates in this Divine life, he shares in, and manifests, the Divine love. Life and love thus are inseparable. It follows from this that to be religious in the Christian sense is to be also ethical: love to men is implied in the life that is in Christ. So the poet was sound when he exclaimed,

Talk we of morals? Oh, Thou bleeding Lamb,  
The true morality is love of Thee.

I have said that in the Gospels there is no mention of the term 'conscience.' This is because in the life that is love—which is a divine life in the soul expressing itself in the energy of love—conscience is superseded as a merely human organ of moral knowledge. Conscience as expounded in moral theory is apt to be regarded as a mere principle of reflection, as an activity of the reason, which judges about what is good or right, and which fulfils its function in judgement. The New Testament conception regards such moral judgement as an aspect of a divine life which is love, and regards it as simply intelligence in the service of love. He who loves God and his neighbour will not steal, or kill, or deceive, or envy, but will act

<sup>1</sup> John x. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> John v. 26.

as a child of the Father and as a brother of his neighbour. What men have called 'conscience' is, according to Jesus, nothing else than the Spirit of God resident in the heart of man, guiding, controlling, and teaching him; even a 'Spirit of Truth,' which is the 'Spirit of the Father.'<sup>1</sup> The impression which the reader gets from Bishop Butler's Sermons is that conscience is an independent faculty in a human nature that is self-enclosed.<sup>2</sup> It is, he says, a 'faculty, natural to man . . . which magisterially exerts itself.'<sup>3</sup>

To Jesus, however, what we call 'conscience' is nothing else but the voice of God in the soul. This voice, as interpreted by Jesus, is the voice of the Father and a communication to man as God's child. Now it was not as a Moral Governor that Jesus revealed God; nor was it in terms of *law* that Jesus interpreted the voice of God. Man is called not so much to obedience as to childlikeness. Jesus Himself passed through life as a child dependent on His Father. Hence the attitude which befits a dependent creature like man is that of the humility which waits for every guidance of the Father, even as the first Beatitude says: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.' Thus the 'conscience' of moral theory is lost in the loving accord which exists between man and his Heavenly Father.

Finally, the Christian view of the union of morality and religion presents a problem which belongs rather to the metaphysic of ethics, but which we must not altogether ignore in this lecture. It is a problem of the mutual relation between morality and religion. Hartmann<sup>4</sup> contends that Theism and Ethics are incompatible on the ground that the existence of a cosmic or infinite purpose

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Boyd Scott, *Christ, the Wisdom of Man*, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Sermon II.

<sup>4</sup> *Ethics*, Eng. trans. 1932. In summarizing the teaching of this work I am indebted to an essay by my friend Rev. K. V. Ramsey, M.A., B.D., which has been published in the *Church Quarterly Review* for January, 1935.

would make impossible that independence of the human will which is essential to the execution of any finite purpose. This is, of course, an old difficulty, which, however, does not seem invincible. It was, I think, the late Prof. James Ward who maintained that a Creator must make creators; that the fitting achievement of creatorship must be the conferment of a nature like to itself, even a measure of self-activity. Thus it becomes a Creator to reproduce his like, to make man in his own image. But in surrounding himself with creators his act of creation is also an act of limitation—even a self-limitation. But such self-limitation would seem natural to a God of love. Surely Divine love must ever go out of itself, and share its glory with others. To speculative thought it is no doubt a puzzle to try to understand the co-existence of the Divine and Infinite Will with human finite wills; but the conception of the Fatherhood of God which Jesus gave to us makes the solution easier.

However, Hartmann disbelieves in Cosmic Teleology. He maintains that, so far from there being an Infinite and Divine purpose directing all things, the only type of purpose which exists is that which arises within our experience of natural causation, and is built thereon. It is the natural order of actual phenomena causally connected which is the fundamental reality, or, should we say, 'actuality.' The ethical purposiveness of man—finite determinism—is superposed upon this order. To conceive the *universe* as purposive is, he maintains, quite unwarranted; for in making the natural depend upon the purposive we are reversing the 'categorical law,' according to which what is purposive is made possible by the natural and depends upon it. Moreover, it is to be guilty of unjustifiable anthropomorphism; it would make all reality into a great man, so to speak; and this would really mean the elimination of man strictly so-called. Hartmann believes in ethical values, which have a self-existence, like so many sciences, in the soul of man,

and which reveal themselves incidentally in practical experience.

From our point of view, such a theory asks at every turn a big question. Whence come these ethical values? Self-existence in their case seems an impossible idea. Further, how do the phenomena of Nature come to have an order of causation? Surely the very notion of an ordered series of phenomena implies a purpose to which they do not themselves give rise, but on which they themselves are dependent for control and guidance. In short, the existence of the world and that of purpose seem inseparable, existence being subordinate to controlling purpose, and not otherwise. Value is implicit in fact; the natural reveals the Divine. We contend, therefore, that Theism, so far from nullifying ethics, is its support.

The reluctance to construe the world in terms of Purpose seems to us to arise, to some extent, at any rate, from an exaggerated intellectualism on the part of philosophers. The theoretical reason is accepted as the sole guide to the interpretation of Reality. But the practical reason, as Sorley has argued,<sup>1</sup> has its claims. Indeed reason, theoretical and practical, is one. Each element, therefore, in human experience—indeed, the whole man—must furnish the clue to the meaning of the world. In this connexion I am not concerned to argue further for the *Intelligence* of cosmic purpose. On this score our astronomers, at least, seem to have no doubt. What is relevant to our discussion is the question of the *character* of this purpose. As to this, the verdict of the history of Nature and of man may seem ambiguous. The pessimist is quick to point out that the facts of life suggest that the Purpose behind the world must be wholly or partly evil. Dr. Inge has said that 'our surface experience harmonizes better with polydaemonism than with monotheism.'<sup>2</sup> But he is careful to point out

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Moral Values and the Idea of God*.

<sup>2</sup> *God and the Astronomers*, p. 227.

that such an inference is indeed superficial. The theory that the world is partly evil and partly good in its origin, that it is the work of two hostile deities who are respectively good and evil, seems contradicted by the unity of the Cosmos: we live in a *universe*.

Again, the supposition that the world has an entirely diabolical origin seems belied both by the amount of happiness in the lives of animals and men, and also by that *nisus* towards sociality revealed by the evolution of life from its most primitive forms up to man—an evolution, however, which has been gravely retarded, and even interrupted, at certain epochs.

The argument from creaturely happiness seems somewhat discounted by the pain which undoubtedly exists among the lower creation. Sub-human creatures have their tragedies; they suffer injuries and violent death at the hands of their foes. Naturalists, however, assure us that man is apt to exaggerate the suffering in the lower world, which is for the most part temporary, and often quite momentary. The simpler nervous organization of insects and animals, their inability to look before and after, very much reduces their pain-capacity. Probably we are right in concluding that in the sub-human world there is an enormous surplus of joy over sorrow.

What, however, is the evidence of man's experience? This at least can be said at the outset—that the sorrows of human life would be far less numerous, and far less serious, if the effects of human folly and injustice were eliminated. Earthquakes and hurricanes certainly have their terrors, though man by his prudence and ingenuity may find out ways of countering or avoiding their destruction. There will always, of course, be the pangs of birth and the anguish of death; though even these sufferings can be much mitigated. It will be found that most of the tragedies of life are tragedies of desire, and therefore avoidable. The desires of hunger and thirst, of sex, of

property, are all made by man the occasion of selfish exploitation—whence comes most of our human woe. If ‘countless thousands mourn,’ the cause is where Robert Burns placed it, viz., in ‘man’s inhumanity to man.’ And yet even with man as he is, with his record of war and strife and hate, there are unbiassed philosophers who do not hesitate to say that the history of man, broadly regarded, reveals a definite trend towards life that is more social. ‘In spite of all antagonisms and troubles,’ says General Smuts, ‘we come in the end to feel that this is a friendly universe. Its deepest tendencies are helpful to what is best in us, and our highest aspirations are but its inspiration. Behind our striving towards betterment are in the last resort the entire weight and momentum and the inmost nature and trend of the universe.’<sup>1</sup>

As to the significance of this evolutionary trend there have been wide differences of interpretation. In a previous chapter we mentioned the view of the late Prof. T. H. Huxley that Nature acts according to the ‘gladiatorial theory of existence.’ This view, however, is now generally acknowledged to be an exaggeration, to say the least: Nature is not entirely ‘red in tooth and claw.’ Truer to the facts seems the statement of General Smuts that the inmost trend of things is towards sociality. Even the very nature of cellular activity has in it this suggestion, for as a cell grows it multiplies. The most primitive forms of life perform the twin functions of nutrition and reproduction. So little can these functions be separated that reproduction has been described<sup>2</sup> as ‘discontinuous growth.’ Thus it seems to be of the very nature of life to give as well as take. Is it unreasonable to read in the behaviour of the crudest and simplest organisms a very early prophecy of that distant age of man when the individual shall love his neighbour as himself?

<sup>1</sup> *Holism and Evolution*, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> By Haeckel.

Life as it evolved developed the method of sexual reproduction with its corollary of parentage. With this development came also the accompanying differentiation of the instincts as (to use McDougall's words) 'the prime movers of all activity.' But just as reproduction is more fundamental than its sexual form, so it would appear that deeper than the instincts of sex and parentage is the tendency of all life to strive not only for the life of self, but for that of other.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas, however, there does not seem in the nature of life any fundamental separation of a self from a social interest, the functional unity of the nutritive and reproductive factors at the instinctive level is precarious, and is always liable to suffer disintegration. For instance, animals will die for their young; but they will also eat them on occasion. Moreover, the sociality of insects and animals for the most part concerns their own species. Between a higher and a lower species there is often conflict, indeed permanent and deadly strife. This, however, while it creates a problem of its own, does not disprove the existence of sociality in the sub-human world. It suggests, for one thing, that Nature seems bent on the sacrifice of that species which has the cruder type of sociality for the sake of a species which can show a higher. Indeed it has been contended<sup>2</sup> that that species which mothers its young the most carefully, viz., the human, has achieved its dominance over all other species by a victory of love, so to speak. Such mothering, for one thing, makes possible that slow and prolonged development of the intelligence which is certainly an effective weapon in the warfare between species. Without doubt intelligence in the long run is much more than a match for animals which have simply their brute strength with which to fight. Whatever may be thought of this particular explanation of the

<sup>1</sup> I have sought to defend this thesis in *Ethical Love*.

<sup>2</sup> By Sutherland in his *Origin and Growth of the Moral Instinct*.

evolutionary triumph of the human species, it is in the life of man that sociality attains its most perfect expression. How far sociality, when actually perfected among mankind, will react beneficially on that sub-human world which is of service to man, is an interesting speculation, prompted, indeed, by certain Scriptural references to the far-reaching effects of human redemption.

However, this reference to the evolutionary trend is made only with the object of showing that sociality is natural in the sense of being possible and congruous to man. That it is of intrinsic value rests, we suggest, upon the judgement of man himself as possessing reason in both its theoretical and practical aspects.

The judgement of the individual on the respective claims of the social or the selfish to be the ideal of life must be taken along with the verdict of society. There can be little doubt, I think, that the good (the social) is regarded as more authoritatively human. And those in whose life the social (the fraternal, the loving) has attained pre-eminence have the witness in themselves as to its authority and value. We postulate that man is free to be either good or bad, to be social or hostile, to cherish love or hate. But there is an unmistakeable *nisus* towards love in men's hearts, all the more impressive because it has to fight against hate and win its own way against the strength of opposing tendencies. Now this *nisus* towards love, whether in the community or in the soul of the individual, can have come only out of the universe. The universe has produced it, and along with it the effort to maintain it. In short, the cosmos seems bent on conserving and increasing the range and strength of love in society. Now the stream cannot rise higher than its source. Therefore we say that the love that is in the world had its origin in a fontal and cosmic love—even the love of God—and would be incompatible with the theory of a diabolical Creator. What is more—the lover himself tends to think of Reality in terms of the



value which to him is supreme. What is highest to him is, he thinks, the most real without him and around him. Thus we conclude that morality both *rests upon*, and also *supports* a transcendental view of the ethical nature of the ultimately Real. Such a statement may seem at first sight to involve a vicious circle. A circle there certainly is, but not one, we think, that is vicious in character. For the argument simply implies that man tries to arrive at a knowledge of the world as a whole by means of his integral and undivided nature. His soul functions as a unity. Normally he does not rigidly separate his metaphysical thoughts from his moral intuitions, nor detach his ethical insight from his speculation about the universe. Divorce, however, between the theoretical and the practical reason does occur; but it is brought about, we suggest, as a result either of the tendency of philosophic inquiry towards abstraction, or of the weakened testimony of an enfeebled moral sense, or of both. In his own degree and manner the ordinary man tends to be a metaphysical moralist, or an ethically-minded metaphysician. This was precisely the way in which Jesus thought of the world. The love in His own great heart had its counterpart in the Divine love which He felt was all around Him. To Him the world was the dwelling-place of His Father, the expression of the Divine care, the manifestation of Divine love.

And if we in our own way are constrained to find the love of God as the source or counterpart of all our human love—love so fontal, so Divine, becomes the object of our worship and our reverence. As the children of His love we have it ever as our duty to cultivate filial devotion to Him who is our Heavenly Father.

The mere moralist, if he even supports an ethic of fraternity, seldom as moralist ever gets beyond it. His outlook rises no higher than the love of man. But in the course of our review it will have been noticed, over and over again, that in Christianity the ethical attitude of man

to man is only an aspect of an attitude which is much more comprehensive, viz., the devotion of man to God as child to Father. In short the rationale of the Christian ethic is to be sought in *filiality*.

If St. Paul could say that all the law was fulfilled in the one saying 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' he could also have said that *life* was much more than *law*, because 'life,' when it is perfect, comprehends law. Now perfect life, according to the New Testament, is life in God—life as God's loyal child. Such a life means love—love of the Father and of the Father's children. Perfect life, then, is filial life in this sense.

It is for the purpose of developing such a life that we are placed in the world. We are not in the world merely for the sake of pleasure. Indeed we have rejected Hedonism as a theory of the moral end. And while this world is not a vale of tears; and while there is much more happiness in it than pessimists like to believe; and while indeed, there would be still more but for human folly and sin—yet it is not for the sake of living a happy life that man is created. Otherwise those whose lot is full of sorrow caused by others would have sadly missed their being's end and aim. We allow, too, that there are misfortunes which no human power seems able to prevent. And after all there is death and its sorrow.

It is sometimes said that this world is a 'vale of soul making'; that, in other words, we are here to develop character. This view solves at least part of the problem of suffering; for it means that in the last resort the weal and the woe of life are to be judged by their effect on character. Even what men call 'disasters' need not be completely so, if out of the evil great good issues.

The doctrine that the purpose of life is the training of character is Christian, if the character in question is understood to be that of filiality. We are in the world, not to learn morality merely in the sense of detailed duties, or

to achieve brotherhood alone (if that would be possible), but to grow in loving obedience to the Divine will, which is a will of love. Our life as children of God may at times necessitate the abandonment of certain earthly interests; it may even imply alienation from much that men call good; it is certain that sooner or later it will mean the cheerful acceptance of death as a friend, and the trustful surrender of our spirits to the Heavenly Father. But filiality has the promise not only of the life that now is, but of that which is to come. It is destined to enjoy the intenser life of immortality in the nearer presence of the Father. At this point the Christian view contrasts with that of many moralists, and of Kant in particular. Kant postulated immortality as a sphere necessary for the perfect conjunction of happiness and virtue, which in the present life are so often disjoined or at best imperfectly united. And he also postulated God as a being of sufficient power to bring about this conjunction beyond the grave. He further thought that goodness, being capable of infinite development, required also infinite time. The Kantian view of immortality, however, fails to relate intimately goodness to God, and goodness to happiness. The connexion in both cases seems quite external. Much more intimate is the association when man's filiality, somewhat orphaned in this world, finds hereafter the closeness of the Father's presence and the joy of being at home with the Lord. The Christian doctrine of goodness as being nothing less than the relationship of sonship to the Heavenly Father demands immortality as its natural logic; for it is only in an eternal home that such sonship can attain perfection of life and its highest ecstasy. And just as immortality is the natural logic of sonship, so it is of Fatherhood. No father, least of all a Heavenly Father, would let his children perish. 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'<sup>1</sup> Immortality is thus a corollary of the Christian ethic.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 32.

In conclusion, the brief review which we have made of the theories of the moralists will, we hope, have sufficiently illustrated the vice of abstraction into which the intellect so easily falls. Now one side of human nature and now another has been identified with the moral life. Sometimes virtue has been equated with knowledge, or the activity of the reason; at other times it has been associated with feeling, in particular with pleasure or happiness. We have been contending that the Christian ethic implies a more concrete view, not only of the nature of man, but also of his universe. Christianity unites all the powers of the soul, and unites the human with the Divine. In a word, goodness is filial life and endeavour. Does this view make void the theories of the moralists? Yes and no. It does make them void so far as they are put forward as all-explanatory; but it includes whatever elements of truth they contain. The Christian ethic is not oblivious of knowledge; it uses man's intelligence to the full. Nor does it scorn the importance of the affectional; it has its own doctrine of beatitude. Nor does it undervalue 'deontics,' or the importance of rules and laws; yea, it establishes these. The Christian good has its face turned towards God, but its hands are at the same time stretched out towards man. And its love of God and of neighbour is suffused with a divine ecstasy of faith and of love.

A recent writer on the history of the moral development of humanity from the earliest times says: 'What we of this generation need more than anything else is *confidence in man*.'<sup>1</sup> I suppose that we may take this as a typical humanist and evolutionary view of man's future in the world. The ethical history of man is, however, ambiguous and, therefore, to this extent undermines our confidence in his future. His record in many directions has been impressive enough. He has won dominion over land, sea,

<sup>1</sup> Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, p. xv.

and air, and by this time he has made Nature to a wonderful extent his servant. But in the realm of human nature his story has been far from glorious. He has succumbed to vices, he has perpetrated the foulest crimes, he has blighted and blasted the lives of his fellows. Too often the story has been one of hatred, strife and bloodshed. The greatest war the world has ever known, with its millions of maimed, stricken, and slain, was but yesterday; and to-day men still prepare for war which, if it eventuates, will well-nigh destroy civilization.

We have ourselves acknowledged that as the centuries have passed there has been in human history a definite ethical advance. In particular man has progressed towards the ideals of liberty and equality. It is sufficient to recall for example the Stoic doctrine of cosmopolitanism with its concept of the fundamental *equality* of all men as citizens of a world-city. This idea of equality has certainly had explosive power, shattering dynasties and changing the very course of social development, as was evident in France at the Revolution.

Nevertheless, the aim of equality is primarily negative, seeking the redress of grievances. 'Historically,' says a writer, 'it has always emerged in the form of a protest.' And indeed the agitation for such equality need not have behind it, and often did not have, any higher motive than a selfish demand for rights, which in turn were sometimes granted from the merely prudential desire to safeguard the stability of the community.

But we are quite willing to go farther than this and to acknowledge that the evolution of the human race shows the tendency to struggle not only for one's own life but also for the life of others. Right down from the history of ancient Egypt, three thousand years before Christ, to the present day, there has been an increase of such forms of sociality as parental and filial affection, devotion to friends and neighbours, tribal loyalty, civic

and national patriotism, union of States in league with one other.

Not that all this growing sociality has always been of the same ethical quality. Sometimes it may have been but the natural urge of the social instinct; sometimes it may have been a regard for the interests of self using social methods; at other times it has risen to self-sacrifice, and even martyrdom. To the Humanist the ambiguity of this evidence of man's moral history is surely bewildering. Christianity, however, has, we think, a good explanation of that ambiguity. Its doctrine of man is that he is a free agent, able to create good and evil. He has often chosen to do evil—hence his black record. Man, however, still remains God's child, even in his sin, though he fails to recognize his Divine parentage. What father would ever forsake his child, least of all a Heavenly Father? So the Christian sees in the long effort of humanity to advance towards love and brotherhood the unceasing movement of the Spirit of God—the Spirit of Love.

True, man in his yearnings after a kindlier world may not always have recognized the source of his aspiration. However, Jesus, when He came, disclosed the origin of all love when He revealed the Father. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,' He said, 'because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'<sup>1</sup>

Let us, however, at this point be clear. Jesus was not a mere philanthropist. He came to reveal God as love and to offer this love of God to man. The reason why man is broken-hearted, captive, blind, and bruised is that he has lost sight of his Father; and losing sight of the Father, he has lost sight also of the real basis of human brotherhood. Jesus would bring back man to God. This return by man

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 18, 19.

to his Father is the only real basis and guarantee of brotherhood. All who have found this love of God have manifested, however imperfectly, love in the service of their fellows. It is true that grievous crimes have been committed in the name of Christianity; but only in the name, certainly not in the Spirit, of Christ; for that Spirit is not a spirit of strife or of cruelty or of intolerance. What, on the other hand, Christianity has done for the poor, the sick and the enslaved, for children, for women, for savage and degraded peoples is a long and wonderful story, but cannot be told here. It is a story which, I think, brings confirmation for our thesis that it is out of the love of God the Father that love for man is born.

One of my predecessors in this lectureship makes the very sound observation that 'if there were no religion, morality would remain. . . . But,' he continues, 'it would certainly be prudential . . . depending upon reward and punishments.'<sup>1</sup> And surely without religion, without any belief in God, morality would be merely a human convention. And it would tend to deteriorate. The selfish tendencies of human nature by reason of their great strength, and in the absence of faith, would threaten the kindlier strains. Conduct would be apt to degenerate into a quest for personal power or pleasure, restrained and regulated by the mass-egoism of society.

It is only by worship of a higher than ourselves that such a lapse into self-worship can be effectually prevented. In the absence of this attitude, in other words without piety (and Comte found how difficult it was to rid himself or humanity of the natural tendency of man to worship) morality becomes a mere affair of so many virtues or so many duties, in which the reference to self would be in practice unavoidable. Greek morality, especially as expounded by Aristotle, did not scruple to admit this self-centred attitude. Even the otherwise lofty ethic of Kant

<sup>1</sup> Waterhouse, *The Philosophical Approach to Religion*, p. 40.

would, if acted on, be surely vitiated by a form of moral pride. In sharp contrast with the moralists the primary aim of Jesus was to reveal the Father, and to reveal Him not by any process of reasoning but through the very evidence of the Divine in His own person and work. And it is by faith in God as the Father of Jesus Christ and our Father, not by man's confidence in himself, that the moral future of humanity will be ensured.

This lecture must not be brought to a conclusion without making it clear that Jesus was not a mere teacher of goodness. The special portrait of Him in the New Testament is that of a *Saviour*. 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins' (Matt. i. 21). In our first chapter we observed that the aim of Jesus was not so much theoretical as practical. Hence He did not merely explain the true life; He desired that men should live it; He Himself spoke, lived, and died, in order to bring men back to love and to God. For this He prayed, for this He agonized, for this He suffered crucifixion. He preached remission of sins that are past; He warned men unceasingly of the temptations of the world; He wooed them to goodness and eternal life; and He promised that all who would be His disciples should have the help of His spirit, even unto the end of the world.

Far be it from me to deny that some of the moralists have been much more than theorists. They have commended to others the good life as they understood it; they have themselves earnestly tried to exemplify it in their own behaviour, and in some cases they have actually died for it. I need only instance the life and death of Socrates. Furthermore, no one would wish to deny that a good life, lived anywhere in the world and at any time in human history, exercises an inspirational power over all those who know of it. Sainthood always exerts a spell. But the power for good exerted by Jesus is different. It is far more than the inspiration effected by a memory. We go



*back* to Socrates. We do not merely go back to Jesus; for Jesus lives by His Eternal Spirit.

Men 'touch Him in life's throng and press, and they are whole again.' It is not too much to say that Jesus is the strongest spiritual power among men to-day. 'There is a cloud of witnesses to the truth that His spiritual force makes bad men good.' In the eighteenth century that same force transformed England. To-day millions the world o'er would testify that their lives have been changed from evil to good, and are being upheld in goodness by the power of the Living Christ. Indeed our modern civilization, bad as it seems in some respects, is being kept from corruption largely by the influence of Jesus on millions of lives in all the countries of the world. Can any one deny that this same Spirit of the Living Christ is day by day working in all lands, in divers ways, for the deliverance of men from the power of evil?

Long ago Jesus cried, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.'

For any light of truth discovered by the moralists we are thankful. Even if the light they obtained was only a broken light, yet a broken light is better than darkness. But light of truth, wherever we see it, is after all reflected light—reflected from Him who is the Light of the world and who 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' And He who is the world's light is also the world's *life*. Both light and life are in Him, and derivatively in all those who are one with Him by faith.

## APPENDIX

### BISHOP BUTLER ON 'HUMAN NATURE'

As we have many times in the course of the Lecture referred to the teaching of Bishop Butler on ethics, we are here appending a fuller account of that teaching considered in its relation to the Christian doctrine of conduct. The importance of Butler in the history of English Moral Philosophy is such that a more detailed examination of his famous Sermons *Upon Human Nature* seems desirable. Since their publication in 1726 more than two hundred years have passed; and it is a great testimony to their vitality that to-day reference is so often made to them as being authoritative in any philosophy of conduct. In his day he was a doughty champion of morality and Christianity; indeed he did much to save England from moral scepticism and the decay of faith. It has, in fact, been asserted that without the preparation which he made by his confutation of Deism Wesley himself could not have obtained those evangelical triumphs which delivered the whole land from spiritual torpor and sin.<sup>1</sup>

In estimating the value of Butler's contribution to moral theory, we have to make allowance for the fact that he presented it in sermons preached at the Chapel of the Rolls Court, which were subject, therefore, to limitations imposed by such a place and occasion. In any criticisms

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand it is also true that Wesley, by his revival of religion throughout the land, brought about a *practical* confutation of Deism. Butler's challenge at Bristol of Wesley's right to preach where and when he liked was an unfortunate misunderstanding due to the fact (shall we say?) that the Bishop was 'the prisoner of his date.' Both, of course, were valiant servants of God, and in their different ways necessary to the progress of His Kingdom.

we make we have to remember also that he lived long before the science of psychology had developed. However, on some points at least, his psychological insight was penetrating; as, for instance, when he perceived that desires are directed not towards happiness as such, but to their appropriate objects. When we are hungry, we desire not pleasure, but food. This truth was surely a permanent contribution to the psychology of ethics.

In his inquiries on the subject of morals Butler adopts the same method as that of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, his predecessors in the Moral Sense school. He does not investigate the abstract relations of things, like the Cambridge Platonists. Rather does he study human nature as it is in itself. He declared that, just as by observation of a watch it is possible to discover the kind of activity for which it was constructed, so by the study of man's nature it is possible to find out the kind of life appropriate to him. Only that activity, he said, can be right which is correspondent to man's nature. In this way Butler adopts the Stoic formula that true life is 'life according to Nature.' He explained that by 'natural' life he meant, not the life which was actual, or primitive, but that which was normal, according to the usage of Shaftesbury. From Shaftesbury also—apart from any more ultimate source—he borrowed the idea of human nature as forming a 'system' or 'constitution.' The idea of a system, he said, 'is a one or a whole made up of several parts; but yet that the several parts, even considered as a whole, do not complete the idea, unless in the notion of a whole you include the relations and respects which those parts have to each other.'<sup>1</sup>

Appetites, passions, affections, and the principle of reflection (otherwise called 'conscience') constitute in the Butlerian psychology the several 'parts' of our nature. All these may be considered in themselves to have 'some' influence. Butler, however, claims that there are differences

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the *Sermons*.

of kind between the several parts of our nature; that in respect to one another some are essentially inferior, others essentially superior. He insisted, however, on the supremacy of that part of our nature called 'conscience.' 'One of the principles of action, conscience or reflection, compared with the rest as they all stand together in the nature of man, plainly bears upon it marks of authority over all the rest, and claims the absolute direction of them all, to allow or forbid their gratification.'<sup>1</sup> Conscience, 'without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself.'<sup>2</sup> 'From its very nature it manifestly claims superiority over all others; insomuch that you cannot form a notion of this faculty, conscience, without taking in judgement, direction, superintendency.'<sup>3</sup>

In the second *Sermon* he speaks of another superior principle besides conscience—which he calls Self-love. 'It is manifest,' he says, 'that self-love is in human nature a superior principle to passion.' By 'passions' Butler means those particular impulses in human nature which are directed towards objects. Sometimes he calls them 'affections,' and says 'the very nature of affection, the idea itself, necessarily implies resting in its object as an end.' Hunger, for instance, is a desire for food; food is the object by which the desire is satisfied. Since all the particular passions or appetites are directed towards specific objects, they are not directed primarily towards happiness. Thus they may be said to be 'disinterested.' Indeed, it is only as the particular passions enjoy their own objects that happiness ensues. If self-love, i.e. the desire for happiness, wholly engrosses us and leaves no room for any other principle, there can be absolutely no such thing at all as happiness. Disengagement (absorption in the object) is absolutely necessary to enjoyment. Hence the paradox that happiness comes by aiming not at it, but at something else. In the words of Butler: 'The

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the *Sermons*.<sup>2</sup> *Sermon*, II.<sup>3</sup> *ibid*.

very idea of an interested pursuit necessarily presupposes particular passions or appetites; since the very idea of interest or happiness consists in this, that an appetite or affection enjoys its object. It is not because we love ourselves that we find delight in such and such objects, but because we have particular affections towards them.' <sup>1</sup>

However, Butler points out that men can form of happiness also a 'general notion,' and thus make their own happiness a definite and specific object of pursuit. He calls the affection of which our private happiness is the object by the term Self-love. So far from condemning this he observes that 'in its due degree it is as just and morally good as any affection whatever,' <sup>2</sup> and he adds that 'the thing to be lamented is, not that men have so great regard to their own good or interest in the present world, for they have not enough.' <sup>3</sup> He proceeds—'Upon the whole, if the generality of mankind were to cultivate within themselves the principle of self-love; if they were to accustom themselves often to sit down and consider what was the greatest happiness they were capable of attaining for themselves in this life, and if self-love were so strong and prevalent as that they would uniformly pursue this their supposed chief temporal good without being diverted from it by any particular passion, it would manifestly prevent numberless follies and vices.' <sup>4</sup>

To this principle of Self-love Butler ascribed a certain dignity. He declares: 'it is manifest that self-love is in human nature a superior principle to passion' . . . 'Without particular consideration of conscience we may have a clear conception of the superior nature of one inward principle to another.' <sup>5</sup>

A similar dignity is in *Sermon I* attributed to Benevolence. Indeed in *Sermon XII* Butler speaks of Benevolence and Self-love as 'the two general affections.'

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the *Sermons*.  
<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Sermon, II.*

In *Sermon V* on Compassion he calls benevolence 'that higher principle of reason.'

On the whole, therefore, we must regard the superior principles of human nature as three, viz. Conscience, Self-love, and Benevolence. How are these related? The teaching of the Sermons on Human Nature undoubtedly places Conscience on the throne. 'Conscience is,' he says, 'in kind and nature supreme over all others.' It 'carries its own authority with it that it is our natural guide.'<sup>1</sup> Accordingly we must regard Self-love, while superior to passions and appetites, as inferior in authority to Conscience. There is, however, a statement in *Sermon XI*, often quoted, which seems inconsistent with this. It is as follows: 'It may be allowed . . . that our ideas of happiness and misery are of all our ideas the nearest and most important to us; that they will, nay, if you please, that they ought to prevail over those of order, beauty . . . Let it be allowed, though virtue or moral rectitude does indeed consist in affection to and pursuit of what is right and good, as such; yet that when we sit down in a cool hour, we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it.'

Much controversy has raged over this passage. Prof. A. E. Taylor in his essay on 'Some Features of Butler's Ethics,'<sup>2</sup> denies that Butler ever co-ordinates Self-love and Conscience as principles of action, or considers Self-love as having a right to prescribe acts which Conscience condemns. He interprets this debatable passage as implying that, if any inconsistency between duty and interest takes place, it is due to mistaken deliverances of conscience itself—which remains the one and only authority. And there is no doubt that *on the whole* Butler does not withdraw from his position in the first three sermons as to the supremacy of conscience over self-love. Indeed, in the

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon*, III.

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophical Studies*, ch. VIII, pp. 309-10.

Dissertation on Virtue, published ten years later than the Sermons, he says, referring to conscience, 'the faculty within us, which is the judge of actions, approves of prudent actions and disapproves of imprudent ones as such.'

There is also ambiguity as to the meaning and rank of Benevolence. In the first three Sermons it appears to be placed on an equality with Self-love and inferior to conscience. 'There is,' he says, 'a natural principle of benevolence in man which is in some degree to society what self-love is to the individual.'<sup>1</sup> As to the relation of benevolence to conscience we read in *Sermon I*: 'A parent has the affection of love to his children: the natural affection leads him . . . to make provision for them; but the reflection (by conscience) that it is his proper business—this added, to the affection, becomes a much more settled principle.' In *Sermon XII*, however, he virtually regards benevolence as superior to conscience, and as 'the very temper of virtue,' remarking that the 'common virtues and the common vices of mankind may be traced up to benevolence, or the want of it.' In the Dissertation already mentioned he appears to repudiate this idea, and declares that 'benevolence and the want of it are in no sort the whole of virtue and vice.'

If, however, we confine ourselves to the teaching of the Sermons on Human Nature, Benevolence must be regarded as co-ordinate in rank with Self-love, and, with it, inferior to Conscience. Man acts suitably to his nature when that which is supreme in authority is dominant in power.

As for Conscience itself, it is cognitive in nature—a principle of reflection; it is also critical, applying a standard whereby we naturally and unavoidably approve some actions and disapprove others; it is also conative and 'magisterially exerts itself,' supplying the urge of an imperative.

Such, in bare outline, is Butler's ethical doctrine. With-

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon*, I.

out a doubt he was, in intention, a *Christian* moralist. But whether his teaching about human nature is quite compatible in all respects with the Christianity he taught and practised in his own person remains now to be considered. We have already hinted in the Lecture at some of the inconsistencies. It seems desirable here to broaden out some of these hints. We will indicate the difficulties that we feel from the two standpoints of psychology and ethics.

1. The Butlerian *psychology*. We have already observed that Butler wrote long before the days of modern psychology, and we must therefore remember that in judging his position we have the advantage of all the recent advances made in the study of the mind of man. We can, therefore, no longer conceive of human nature as consisting of 'parts' called 'appetites,' 'passions,' 'affections,' and a 'principle of reflection' or conscience, for we regard the functional unity of the soul as now an established truth. The whole mind as cognitive, affective, and conative is involved in any and every normal type of experience. If, as we are inclined to believe, the basis of mental activity is instinctive, then the mind has an innate predisposition to respond in a definite way to certain stimuli. On such a basis the mind proceeds to build; but, however elaborately it forms the superstructure, it never becomes independent of the foundations.

It is, perhaps, not too much to say that there is nothing in the highest development of mental activity of which there is not the prophecy in sub-human creatures. The principle of continuity leads us to see in the animal species that sense of desirable ends and of the way to their realization which is the precursor of the intelligent appreciation of worth which we tend to think is peculiar to man. 'It may be a mistake, as Dr. C. S. Myers has pointed out, to sever instinct and intelligence. The experience of being baulked in the attainment of their goal



appears to stimulate in lower forms of life experimental attempts to reach the end by some variation of method, as though intelligence began as a venture of faith in the service of an instinct. However this may be, in the case of man intelligence can do much more than vary the means to attain an end; it can modify the end of action itself. And so man, though a creature of instincts like the animals, is not their slave.<sup>1</sup> As a result of the activity of his intelligence man's instincts tend to lose both their inevitability and specificity. He introduces system into his experience. He forms 'Sentiments,' which are complexes formed out of emotions, their excitants and tendencies.

Such 'sentiments' are organized round an 'idea,' rather than a 'sense-impression'; their affective aspect takes the form of a permanent disposition to feel in a certain way rather than that of momentary excitement; and the practical trend is a plan of action rather than an isolated deed—an 'enduring conative attitude'—as it has been called.<sup>2</sup> Thus a sentiment is a construction of experience which, unlike that of an instinct, is the work of the will of the individual, although the material used is furnished by instinct. But there are many sentiments, and between them conflict may arise. Sooner or later a Master-Sentiment must and will be found. This will bring about the integration of the whole personality.

What Butler calls conscience would, therefore, from this point of view, be of the nature of a Master-Sentiment; it would be the organization of experience with reference to an end of life which is thought to be of supreme worth. In short Conscience would mean a final valuation of ends. But even at this ultimate stage of the mind's development we have not entirely lost touch with instinct; for, as Drever has insisted, the sense of *worthwhileness* is an essential element in instinctive experience and appears to be felt by insects and animals. Is it, therefore, fanciful to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Ethical Love*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

interpret the preference which a bee has for a certain flower as a distant prophecy or a dim analogue of man's evaluation of different forms of behaviour? When we express the opinion that the instincts are the 'raw-material' of morality, what we mean is that man by his endowment of will and intelligence develops and modifies them in the service of some sentiment and ultimately of a Master-Sentiment.

The attempt to find the fundamental life-tendency of which the various instincts are differentiations is a fascinating problem, which, however, cannot here be discussed at any length. That Freud should describe the *Libido* as love, whatever such a term may be taken to include, is significant. It is true he often characterizes the life-urge as sexual; but in recent writings he seems inclined to give a broad interpretation to such sexuality and indeed to connect it under the one word 'love' with devotion to parents, children, and friends.<sup>1</sup> Now, though it is true that the sex and parental attitudes are accompanied by different mind-body reactions, yet both seem to be derivatives of some basic tendency to cherish or enrich life. Otherwise expressed, sociality lies deeply founded in the nature of man, and its elaboration in terms of conscience would be the elevation of Love as the Master-Sentiment of human life, in all its completeness of range and scope.

It may be seriously questioned whether Butler's principle of Self-love is a 'part' of human nature in the same sense as the passions and affections. Its object, he says, is 'a due concern about our own interest or happiness.' To act according to this principle on occasions is, according to Butler, quite natural. This does not seem to find much support in psychology. What is natural seems rather the integration of life with life, i.e. sociality. There is, of course, an instinct of self-preservation. But the self which an animal seeks to protect in any struggle or conflict is its

<sup>1</sup> *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, pp. 37-9.

own life. But so different is this from an egoistic aim that at the moment of need the reaction is a reflex movement; there is no reference to self as an ideal construction. Instead of co-ordinating the interests of self and others by a sentiment in analogy with the sociality of animals, man characteristically fails to effect such a synthesis. He transforms the activity of his ego into egoism. Nature, on the other hand, suggests that what in the sub-human kingdom she integrates man should not, by his sophistication, put asunder. There should be no such dualism as that which is implicit in the distinction between Self-love and Benevolence. All that the instinct of self-preservation seems to provide for is life-continuity, without any pre-judgement of the way in which life so continued should be used, certainly without any rigid separation of individual from social interests.

In his inventory of the 'parts' of human nature Butler does not appear to find what has been described as a sense of the 'numinous,' or what Bergson<sup>1</sup> characterizes as the myth-making function. In other words, the Butlerian psychology does not include anything that refers to the transcendental, the superhuman, or the divine. Conscience is autonomous, and in regard to morals human nature has a self-sufficient constitution. There is at least one passage where he speaks of conscience anticipating 'a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own.' But he adds, 'this part of the office of conscience is beyond my present design explicitly to consider.' Far be it for us of a later day to complain of this omission, seeing that in Butler's day Anthropology and Psychology of Religion were, as sciences, quite undeveloped. Nevertheless, a true view of the constitution of man cannot be obtained if it is unrelated to that wider view of the 'Constitution' of the Universe of which his own is a part. Between the two 'constitutions' provision for contact

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, passim.

might be expected to be found in human nature. As a matter of fact the sciences already named verify the truth that man is essentially religious, that his attitude to himself and his neighbours is never normally divorced from a certain attitude to the Divine, however conceived. Man's moral development goes along with his religious culture: his view of his God and his conception of his duty to himself and others act and react on each other. The loftier his conception of God, the loftier is his idea of the moral standard; and *vice versa*.<sup>1</sup> Butler's own religious attitude is not, of course, here in question. A similar attitude was pre-supposed by him in the hearers to whom he preached these sermons. But the omission from his ethical theory of this religious factor was bound to make his application of the formula 'Conformity to Nature' somewhat truncated, as we shall now try to make clear.

2. *Ethical Difficulties*. In the text of our Lecture we have referred very briefly to some of these. According to Butler's scheme Self-love and Benevolence are principles which are co-ordinate in rank, the one dictating the pursuit of private happiness, the other that of the happiness of others. It is undoubted that the happiness of the individual and that of society are up to a point mutually involved. That they are coincident is certainly not a fact, although the superficial theological optimism of the eighteenth century believed that they would be so. Indeed, if account be taken both of the quantity and quality of pleasure, such a coincidence would seem to be practically impossible. But even supposing there is a coincidence in fact, there is from the side of motive a duality of interest—*my* happiness and *yours*—a duality, indeed, which is ever ready to become a dualism. For in the event of any discrepancy of interest

<sup>1</sup> 'The beginnings of ethics are just the customs of the tribe, which stand for a social good and are as a rule binding on the will of the members. Over these customs tribal religion casts its protecting shadow, and invests them with a religious sanction and value.' Galloway, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 195-6.

as between myself and my neighbours, either I must seek others' happiness to augment my own, or pursue my own only so far as I can thereby augment the happiness of society. Self-love must be absorbed in Benevolence, or Benevolence in Self-love; and either absolute Egoism or absolute Altruism is exposed to serious theoretical objections. But it will be asked 'Does not conscience supply the unification that is necessary?' There is no doubt that such was Butler's intention. Conscience in his view is certainly authoritative; but the principles according to which that authority is to be exercised are not clear. It is a judging faculty, but what its judgements are is not forthcoming. This august authority intervenes without apparently any knowledge of the issue in dispute, or any real acquaintance with the combatants, or any basis which would justify a settlement. Prof. A. E. Taylor, who puts up a valiant defence for Butler, says, 'He supposes the deliverances of conscience to be universal principles, e.g. the commands to practise generosity, gratitude, justice, and the other great typical virtues.'<sup>1</sup> That such as these are deliverances of conscience is not questioned. The present criticism is that they are 'supposed' to be such, and *not shown to be inherent in conscience* as a principle of reflection.

There is, however, a further complication. If, as Butler says, the supreme concern of the individual is to obey his conscience, both Self-love and Benevolence are virtually deprived of any status of independence as regulative or 'superior' principles. The duty of the individual is to be conscientious rather than happy, or to be happy only because happiness would be an expression of conscientiousness. Our duty to our neighbour would accordingly be the promotion not of his happiness, but of his conscientiousness. What, then, becomes of the so-called 'superior' principles of Self-love and Benevolence?

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Studies*, p. 312.

Our final criticism of Butler's view of human nature is as to its *autonomous* character. In this respect Butler was too much under the influence of his predecessor, Shaftesbury. To Shaftesbury human nature was a self-contained and self-sufficient whole, like some symmetrical fabric or constitution. He thought that good and evil had their foundation in human nature and were quite independent of the existence, or non-existence, of a God. However much Butler was biassed by the philosophical standpoint of his predecessors he could not, as a Bishop of the Church, be expected to shut out his Christian pre-suppositions. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that he describes Conscience as the guide assigned to us by the Author of our nature,<sup>1</sup> and that he says of its judgements that they anticipate the verdicts of a Higher Court, even a Divine Assize. Nevertheless, these religious considerations are superposed upon his exposition of conscience and are not inherent in it. Conscience, he says, 'carries its own authority with it . . .' No one would dispute that there exists in all men a consciousness of a standard of behaviour which they feel has authority over them; but, in spite of Humanism, that consciousness never appears to be purely and exclusively moral. Morality and Religion are associated in human experience, just as in theory ethics and metaphysics usually supplement each other. Philosophers for the most part base their ethics on metaphysics, or their metaphysics on ethics. Our own view, as expressed in the Critical Summary, is that man is not a mere moralist, nor a mere metaphysician. Naturally he is both, and both simultaneously. His thoughts about duty are mingled with religious elements, just as his religious outlook is accompanied by ethical inferences.

From Christianity the idea of human nature as a self-contained constitution is absent. Man is regarded in close and intimate relation to a very much larger Whole. The

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon*, III.

orientation throughout is definitely religious. Man is a child, actual or potential, of God. This relationship is crucial, it determines everything; it determines what the individual shall do for himself, how he shall regard himself, how he shall regard his neighbours. Morality is not an independent discipline: from first to last it is the human and interhuman expression of a religious relationship.

Now the great doctrine of Christianity about God is that He is our Father, and that His nature is Love, of which Love we are all the offspring. It follows that the primary attitude of man shall be the reciprocation of this Divine Love expressed as it was in Jesus Christ. It is this which should be the regnant aim of human nature. It was not as a Moral Governor that Jesus interpreted God, but as a Father. Consequently that to which Jesus summoned men was not so much obedience as childlikeness. Such is the attitude which, above all, man should seek to cultivate. Hence humility, the humility of a dependent creature, and especially of a sinner needing heavenly mercy, is the supreme requisite for human nature, even as the first Beatitude declares 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

'We shall seek in vain in the teaching of Jesus,' says Dr. Boyd Scott, 'for anything like a precise form of this admiration of Conscience; Butler's Conscience as the regnant faculty is not there.'<sup>1</sup> In that teaching what men call conscience becomes the voice of the Father to His child.

Also, the 'superior principle' which Butler calls Self-love, which he takes to be the concern of the individual for his own happiness, is quite transformed in the Christian ethic. The supreme concern of the individual for himself is that he should be a loyal child of the Heavenly Father, and that he should regard all his powers as consecrated to God. The three ideals known as self-respect, self-

<sup>1</sup> Boyd Scott, *Christ, the Wisdom of Man*, p. 88.

reverence, and self-control are re-interpreted and re-adjusted so that they may manifest rather the power and glory of God in the life of the individual. As a child of the Father man reverences himself *as such a one*.

And as in the case of the Butlerian Self-love, so does the purpose of Benevolence undergo transformation. The individual endeavours to promote in the life of his neighbour, not primarily his happiness, but a like filial spirit. In the human love, which is both the creation and the imitation of Divine Love, there is no love of self which can be opposed to love of neighbour. Dualism of interest as between self and neighbour is excluded; for the interest of both is the same, viz. the cultivation of the love of the Father in oneself and in all men.

This filial spirit and fraternal love are, of course, not 'natural' in the sense of being easy, or even usual; but only in the sense of being normal for man. However, man not only falls away from the normal, but is ever prone to do so. He becomes independent, and tends to foster his independence. Hence, it is only by a complete and often painful surrender of this independence that man can begin to live as a child of God. This is surely what Jesus meant when He said that in order rightly to live man must first 'die.' In Butlerian self-love there are no tears, and there is no cross. The crucifixion of self, however, is a radical necessity for the realization of our heritage as children of the Father.



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